REPATRIATION

BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORY

The British Columbia Historical Federation Magazine | Volume 58 № 1

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- Witsuwit'en delegation to Paris
- Cultus Lake Princesses
- The Work of Lucy Bell
- Maiyoo Keyoh
- Repatriation Resources
- Tsik'usdzai homecoming
- William White

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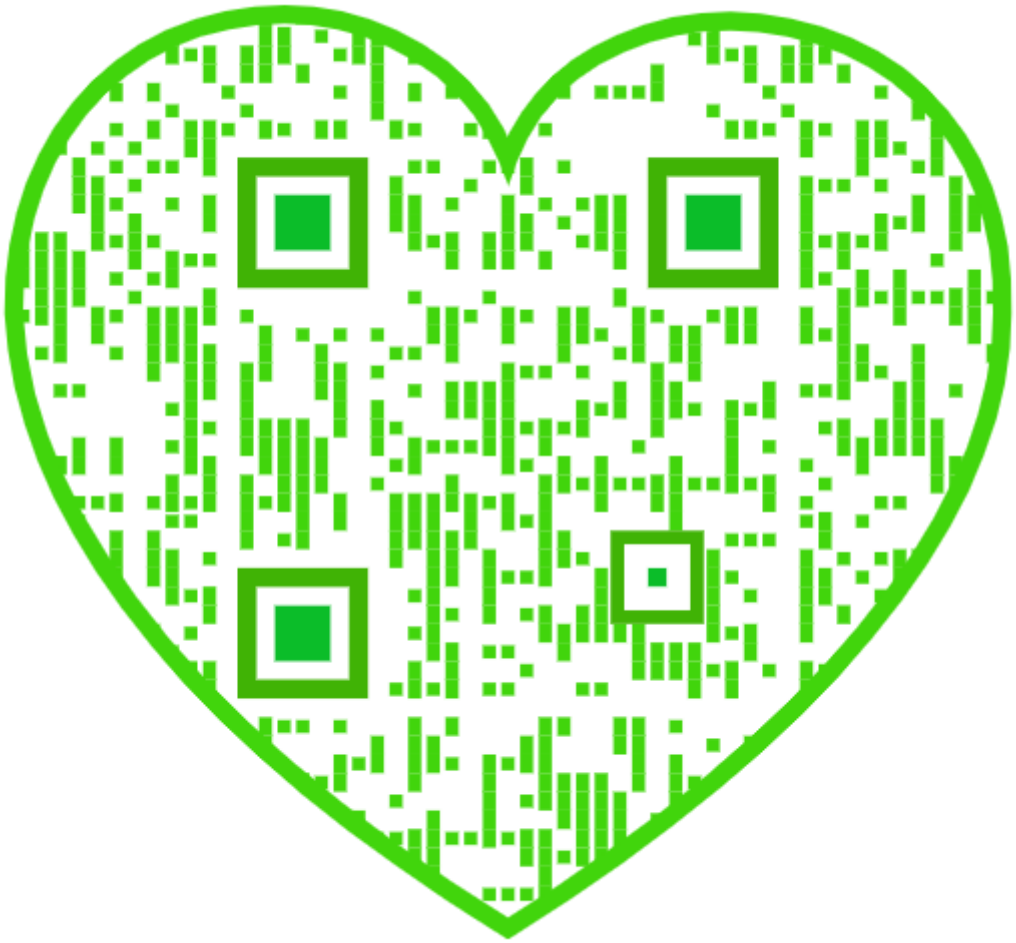

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In this issue

Published by the British Columbia Historical Federation | Spring 2025 | Volume 58 № 1

Features

8 **The Cultus Lake Princess Contest Through Stó:lō Women's Voices**

By Juliana Schneider Medeiros

The annual Cultus Lake Princess contest was more than a beauty contest. It featured young women who represented their home community or extended family and worked hard to raise funds to support the Cultus Lake Indian Festival, now called the Cultus Lake Water Sports-War Canoe Races. Juliana Medieros catches up with four former princesses as they reflect on the meaning of this role.

13 **Lucy Bell Receives Reconciliation Award**

By Stacey Brzostowski

Stacey Brzostowski of the *Haida Gwaii News* shares some of the many accomplishments of Lucy Bell, an activist for justice in the heritage field.

15 **Reconnecting to Witsuwit'en History – Restoring Relations with the K'ëgit Totem Pole: A khiyt (winter) dispatch from Witsuwit'en yintah (territories)**

By Hagwilnekhlh, Ron Mitchell, Dzïggot, Ron Austin, We'es Tes, Sandra Martin Harris, Jean Matheson, Diana Wilson, Toni Michell, Drew Harris, Helen Harris, Tyler McCreary, Joanne Connauton, and Mélanie H. Morin

In October 2024, a delegation of Witsuwit'en hereditary chiefs, elders, artists, and youth embarked on an emotional and historic journey to Paris, France. Their goal was to reconnect with a significant piece of their cultural heritage—the K'ëgit totem pole belonging to C'idimsggin'ïs, housed at the Quai Branly Museum.

18 **"My Precious": Museum collections and repatriation of cultural objects**

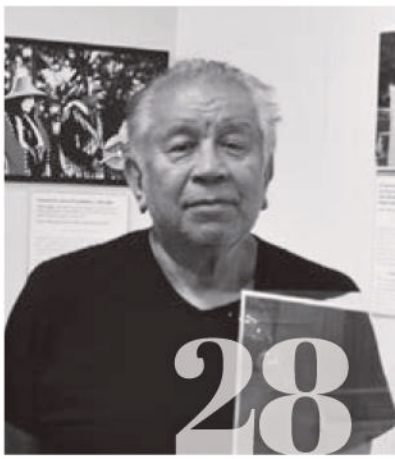
By Chad Hellenius

Chad Hellenius of The Exploration Place in Prince George writes of the call to action of repatriation for museums and the project of bringing the Tsik'usdzai (headdress) belonging to the Keyokwhadachun (head of the keyoh) back home to the Maiyoo Keyoh.

23 **Repatriation and Reconciliation as Basic Heritage Operations**

By Leia Patterson

BCMA Reconciliation Resource Advisor Leia Patterson shares some strategies for small museums to begin where they are as they incorporate reconciliation considerations into core operations.



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This Issue

3 EDITOR'S NOTE | Coming Home: Stewardship and Care
By Aimee Greenaway
What do repatriation and rematriation mean to the communities who are working to bring home cultural belongings? And how can museums support this work?

26 From Health Resort to Pleasure Resort: Reconstructing Harrison Hot Springs as a tourist destination, 1920–1930
By Lydia Kinasewich
Lydia Kinasewich is the recipient of the 2022 W. Kaye Lamb Student Scholarship from the BCHF, and this article is an excerpt from her original essay.

33 American Legacy: Victoria's sequoias
By Rick James
We're used to hearing about Rick James's work underwater and on the ocean, but in this piece, he shares his research on historic seedlings that now flourish in Victoria.

Regulars

4 INBOX
Letters to the Editor

5 FRONT WORDS
By Mark Forsythe
In his quarterly roundup of heritage happenings in BC, columnist Mark Forsythe takes us to Hat Creek Ranch, into the ancient stories of hazelnuts, to the Lytton Chinese Museum and the renewed spirit of welcome from communities along the Fraser Canyon, and into the Climate Disaster Project at UVic.

28 Ni uchxwiyunem? (Did you listen?)
By Snuneymuxw Titumels William A. White
William. A White shares the importance of listening and the strength of prayers and songs to surround and protect the community.

36 REFRACTING HISTORY | Stories in Digital and Print: A Year of Refracting History!
By Dalys Barney
Join us in celebrating the work of Books Editor Dalys Barney as she marks her first birthday at *BC History.*

FRONT COVER

From left to right with Maiyoo Keyoh headdress: Jim Munroe (President of the Maiyoo Keyoh Society), Petra A'huille (Keyohwhudachun), Charlotte Munroe (Director of the Maiyoo Keyoh), and Seraphine Munroe (Director of the Maiyoo Keyoh). Photo: Nolan Guichon

Advertisers' Index

BCHF Award Nominations 22
BCHF Conference . . . . . IFC
BC History Centennial Legacy Fund 13
Chinese Canadian Museum 22
Heritage House Books. . . . . BC
South Asian Studies Institute . . . . . IBC

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Canada

Coming Home: Stewardship and Care

Aimee Greenaway

Discussions about repatriation and rematriation have become mainstream over the last few years in British Columbia. Many of us have followed news stories with headlines in national and international papers about cultural belongings being returned to First Nations in BC from community and major museums around the world, and from private collectors.

These stories are about reconnection. Last fall, a Wet'suwet'en delegation travelled to the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, in Paris, to visit the K'ëgit totem pole. In this issue, Wet'suwet'en delegates illuminate the impact of seeing this significant belonging in person.

For many Indigenous communities, repatriation or rematriation efforts are multigenerational, and it can take decades, or longer, to bring their belongings home. How can museums and heritage organizations support the work of Indigenous communities? We invited Leia Patterson from the BC Museums Association to share her thoughts on ways to create authentic relationships that deepen the stories shared in museums.

The Tsik'usdzai (headdress) that belonged to the Keyohwhudachun (head of the keyoh) has been repatriated to the Maiyoo Keyoh and demonstrates the profound role of a cultural artifact belonging with its ancestral community. Author Chad Hellenius challenges us to think about the importance of preserving knowledge systems. Is the preservation of a cultural object more important than the preservation of the knowledge systems represented by that cultural object? And Juliana Schneider Medeiros's article highlights the voices of Stó:lo women involved in the Cultus Lake Princess contest based on interviews with past participants and organizers.

Projects profiled in this issue barely scratch the surface of the deep work being done in the province to safeguard ancestors, track down belongings and bring them home, and advocate for knowledge sovereignty. We welcome stories about this work for future issues.

Aimee Greenaway

Aimee Greenaway is a 6th generation Nanaimo resident who grew up in the former coal mining town of Extension. In 2002, Aimee graduated from Vancouver Island University (VIU) with a Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts in History, which sparked her passion for local history. She is the curator at the Nanaimo Museum.

Our content creators live in all parts of the province, but *BC History* is produced in the Traditional Territory of the Coast Salish-speaking peoples.

Inbox

Stamp Proposed

Dear Editor,

Not since 1982 has Canada Post issued a postage stamp commemorating a key figure in the history of the Canadian labour movement. That was A.R. Mosher, president of the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) which in 1956 merged with another organization to form the current Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

Since November 2023, we have been working to improve the situation by adding more historic labour figures and events to Canada Post's commemorative stamp series. We hope the committee will commission a series based on these suggestions. The stamp guidelines call for images that "instill pride in their country" and "evoke Canadian history." Surely the history of Canadian working people merits such recognition.

Cover image for *BC History's* Winter 2024 issue

"Postage stamps have usually presented a selective reading of the public identity," notes historian David Frank in "The Labour Stamp: The Image of the Worker on Canadian Postage Stamps." He adds that "some narratives are privileged, and others are neglected." One of them is the story of Canadian workers.

Frank explains that more than 1,500 postage stamps have been issued by Canada Post since the 19th century, but "what can we learn from postage stamps about the place of workers in Canadian history?"

The current set of proposals, submitted to a stamp advisory committee that adjudicates what gets placed on stamps, includes British Columbians such as Albert "Ginger" Goodwin, leader of a 1917 strike at the Trail smelter, and Arthur "Slim" Evans, organizer of the 1935 On-to-Ottawa Trek. Both men strove to improve working conditions in the industrial workplace and the relief camps set up by Prime Minister R.B. Bennett during the Great Depression.

The stamp proposals also seek to recognize two BC women who mark important moments in Canadian labour history. Helena Gutteridge championed women's rights and helped secure mothers' pensions and the minimum wage. Mary Ellen Smith was the first female member of the BC legislature and the first female cabinet minister in the British Empire. She helped win the province's first mothers' pension plan and the female minimum wage acts.

The series of 10 proposed stamps also suggests honouring the Nine-Hour Movement Pioneers, the Knights of Labour, the One Big Union founders, the leaders of the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, a female leader of the Eaton strike of the late 1940s, and Canada's Labour Day established first in the mid-1880s and emulated by a later day in the United States.

The proposals have been acknowledged by a stamp director, but so far none has been accepted for immortalization on the face of a stamp. Readers interested in submitting proposals see www.canadapost-postescanada.ca/cpc/en/support/kb/sending/stamps-packaging/suggest-a-stamp-subject-or-apply-to-design-a-stamp.page .

Ron Verzuh
Member of BCHF Board

A Long and Steamy Connection

The Sts'ailes and Sq'éwlets people of the Harrison River are near neighbours to the original hot springs at Harrison [see Lydia Kineswich's article page 24] and have a long connection to these waters. The Halq'eméylem name for the location of the town of Harrison Hot Springs is Qwólts, meaning "boiling water" or "medicine water."[1]

After the natural hot spring pool adjacent to the Harrison Hot Springs Resort was mysteriously filled with boulders in October 2024, Sts'ailes Grand Chief William Charlie shared that "stories passed down from elders tell how First Nations from afar would paddle their canoes to bathe in the hot springs on the territory of the Sts'ailes First Nation. They believed the water contained medicine."[2]

The infill of the pools is being investigated by BC's Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resource Stewardship.

"We share the land of the traditional territories of the Sts' ailes, Seabird Island, Sq'ewá:lxw, Cheam, Xax'tsa, Leq'a:mel, Samahquam, Sq'ewlets, and Skatin First Nations. The history and stories run deep; each story, like its community, is unique."

~ Tourism Harrison

1 Adam Louis, "Province investigates after 'Hobo Hot Springs' filled in," *Agassiz-Harrison Observer,* November 15, 2024.
2 Nono Shen, "Ministry investigating after natural pools filled with boulders in Harrison Hot Springs BC." *The Canadian Press,* November 7, 2024.

Opening ceremonies at Historic Hat Creek Ranch. Photo: Mary Putnam

Ranch visitors enjoy a stagecoach ride. Photo: Mary Putnam

1 Under New Management

It's been one year since the Bonaparte First Nation's St'uxwtews Pesuten Heritage Society started managing Historic Hat Creek Ranch site. Established in 1860 during the gold rush, the ranch's roadhouse was an important stop on the Cariboo Wagon Road. It also employed local First Nations. Located 11 kilometres north of Cache Creek, the site is now weaving settler and Indigenous stories together like a braided rope.

General Manager Brandy Cooper-Chardon says it has been a rewarding transition year. "We approach this blending with respect and balance, emphasizing that these stories are intertwined yet distinct. Our guided tours and interpretive signage aim to present both perspectives—acknowledging the rich cultural heritage of the St'uxwtews people alongside the impact of settler history. Historic Hat Creek Ranch is a perfect place to showcase where the past meets the present."

The ranch will open for the new season on May 1, employing 30 to 35 people from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds. "This staffing mix fosters cultural exchange and community-building. The economic impact has been positive, with increased tourism benefiting local businesses in Cache Creek and surrounding areas. Moreover, our employment opportunities support both youth and cultural ambassadors, promoting skills development and heritage preservation."

Visit Historic Hat Creek's website at hatcreek.ca.

Hazelnuts have a long history of cultivation by Indigenous peoples. Photo: Mark Forsythe

2 Ancient Hazelnuts

Indigenous peoples have tended forests and shrubs for food like crabapples, bitterroot, and cranberries for millennia. A new study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* suggests that hazelnuts were transplanted and grown at least 7,000 years ago by the Gitxsan, Tsimshian, and Nisga'a peoples in the Skeena River region. This is roughly the same period that wheat and barley were being grown in the Nile River Valley, and corn was planted in Mexico.

Chelsey Geralda Armstrong, an ethno-ecologist and archaeologist from Simon Fraser University's Department of Indigenous Studies, told CBC News that their research "cuts through assumptions of B.C. and the Northwest Coast being wild and completely untouched." This also underscores oral history about Indigenous people cultivating hazelnuts in communities at the confluence of major rivers. DNA testing revealed that shared genetic clusters of hazelnuts are "consistent with the movement of humans across the landscape." Hazelnuts were likely traded, and the word for hazelnut is similar in different Indigenous languages. The authors conclude: "This study highlights the

The new Lytton Chinese History Museum.
Photo: Courtesy Mark Forsythe

Lytton Chinese Museum's new interior.
Photo: Courtesy Lytton Chinese History Museum

New signage at Yale highlights the Fraser Canyon's history, recreation, and culture. Photo: Courtesy Mark Forsythe

often-overlooked agency of Indigenous Peoples in shaping species range and distributions in North America."

3 Rebirth of a Museum

Almost four years after the Lytton Chinese History Museum burned to the ground, a new museum will open on May 3. An extensive collection of artifacts (once described as being second only to the provincial collection) was lost, but some remains were sifted out of the ashes, including broken pots covered in melted glass. They will be on display as part of the museum's own story. Owner Lorna Fandrich started to rebuild the collection shortly after the 2021 fire that consumed most of the village and took two lives. "I am most excited about the new items in the Chinese laundry display. They were donated by a family that collected them from an old laundry in Zeballos, BC. So many individuals have come forward with artifacts and I am truly grateful. Although many of the items are not from the Lytton area, they are from the same era and tell the Lytton Chinese story."

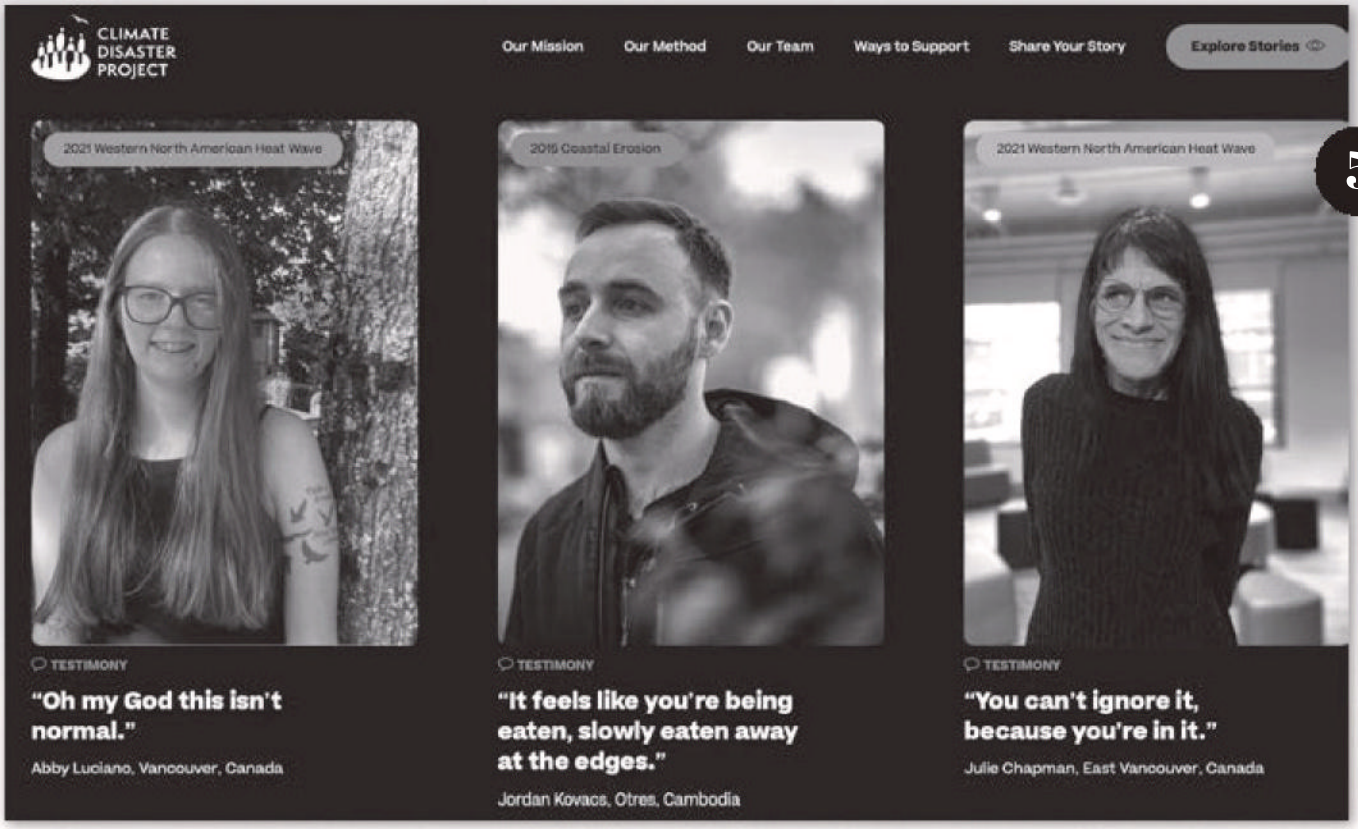
Lorna checked reconstruction progress every day for five months. "We removed the two small display rooms and created a better traffic flow through one large room. It has been amazing to see that it is a huge step-up from what we had before."

The Village of Lytton also lost its community museum; plans for a new one are included in a "community hub" being built, thanks to a $25 million federal grant.. Donations of Lytton-related artifacts, documents, and money are most welcome. Contact the museum at lyttonchinesehistorymuseum.com/.

A new park to honour Chief Cexpe'nthlEm, a revered leader and peacemaker, is expected to open this spring. It will include a lookout to the confluence of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers, interpretive signage to share the Cexpe'nthlEm story, and landscaping for a new community gathering space.

4 Canyon Renewal

Come back! That's the hope of communities along the wondrous Fraser Canyon route, once the main corridor into the Interior. After the Coquihalla



Climate Disaster Project website.

Image: climatedisasterproject.com

Highway opened in 1986, local Canyon businesses and communities suffered severely; in recent years wildfires and floods have also been devastating.

In 2019 Fraser-Nicola MLA Jackie Tegart began to collaborate with local governments, Indigenous communities, and businesses to develop a new tourism master plan to revitalize the Canyon route. Provincial funding has produced two impressive highway sign installations at opposite ends of the Canyon, in Yale and in Lytton. The signs include Nlaka'pamuxcin, Halq'eméylem, and English languages to highlight viewpoints, historical sites, recreational opportunities, and communities. Meanwhile, reconstruction of the Village of Lytton, along with restoration projects at Alexandra Bridge (spearheaded by the Spuzzum First Nation and New Pathways to Gold Society) and at Alexandra Lodge (by owners Shirley and Ken MacKinnon), bode well for the future. Why not explore the Canyon Route and its 10,000-year history this summer?

5 Personal Archive of Climate Change

These are truly historic times. Climate change is intensifying with new extremes each year; the task of comprehending heat waves, wildfires, and flooding can be mind-numbing. The Climate Disaster Project, based at the University of Victoria, aims to capture the individual human stories that make the consequences of climate change tangible and relatable. The project is building an online archive of stories based on interviews with people who have been affected around the world. Stories range from the trauma of losing a home during BC wildfires to the loss of lives and livelihood after typhoons slammed into the Philippines.

The Climate Disaster Project is led by faculty and students, with contributions from climate scientists, journalists, psychologists, and climate disaster survivors. The project's website allows a spark of hope: "We can survive this new age of disaster if we build empathy and solidarity around the experience of climate change. Because story creates community, and community creates hope." Read or share your own stories by visiting the project's website: climatedisasterproject.com/share-your-story/.

Mark Forsythe travels through BC and back in time, exploring the unique work of British Columbia Historical Federation members.

The Cultus Lake Princess Contest Through Stó:lō Women's Voices

by Juliana Schneider Medeiros

The festival

The Cultus Lake Indian Festival,[1] organized by the Stó:lō people of the Fraser Valley, hosted for many years an annual princess contest. The festival started in 1958, the year of the British Columbia Centennial, when founders Richard Malloway, from Yakweakwioose (Yeqeyeqwí:ws) First Nation, Edna and Albert Douglas, from Cheam (Xwchiyò:m) First Nation, Burns and Wilma Mussell, from Skwah (Sqwá) First Nation, and Sam Jimmie, from Squiala (Sxwoyehá:la) First Nation, won a grant that made it possible to get started.[2] The festival's main attraction were the war canoe races, which attracted people from all over British Columbia and also from Washington State.[3] In the beginning, the festival was very popular and attended by big crowds of non-Indigenous people, but with time the event became more focused on an Indigenous public.[4]

From its inception up to the turn of the twenty-first century, the princess contest was an important part of the festival.[5] Indigenous teenage girls representing

Louise Kaarsmacher (née Louise Silver)

Princess in 1971

It felt really good. I felt like I had made a big accomplishment because I did work really, really hard. It was almost overwhelming, because everywhere I went, that day especially, people were congratulating me and shaking my hand and I had to walk all day, I had to walk through Cultus Lake grounds and talk to the people. A couple families offered me lunch. I had lunch with one family. My dad followed me everywhere. They had a dance that night as well. And I had to attend that. And my father made sure that I didn't dance with any boys. I danced with him. It felt really good.

It was a proud moment in my life … I felt beautiful, worthy. I haven't always felt that in my life.

The Chilliwack Progress

NINETIETH YEAR, No. 9 — THE CHILLIWACK PROGRESS, Wednesday, June 11, 1980 — 25¢

Ball vows fight on meat inspection

Progress takes ... tional awards

Area ... go to

NEW NATIVE PRINCESS — Marcella Mackenzie, 19, of the Yewaiten band in Sardis was chosen native princess at the Cultus Lake Indian Festival on the weekend. She reigns both sides of the Fraser River regularly working at the Indian Friendship Centre in Mission Sunday evenings. The festival drew large crowds to the lake on the weekend despite mixed weather conditions. Canoe races and other water-related activities were featured. Photo by Tony Sevos

...nel Simpson ... base chief

ORP draws ... at region

Group wants tracks moved

Planning committee

their home community or their extended family competed to be crowned princess. However, the contest wasn't simply an attraction. It was about raising funds and financially supporting the festival. In the 1990s it also became a way for many in the region to reconnect with Stó:lō culture. But that didn't mean the contest was without controversy. For even though it was never the equivalent of a beauty pageant similar to what was occurring in neighbouring settler communities, it drew criticism from Indigenous feminists for the way it contributed to promoting stereotypes of Indigenous women and objectifying female beauty.

The princess contest

Contestants were always Indigenous teenage girls from the Fraser River region, mainly Stó:lō. According to Denise Douglas, who took part in the 1970 festival, "girls from each major Stó:lō family in their coming-of-age were expected to run for princess."[6] Once the girls signed up for the contest, their main objective was to sell raffle tickets and raise money to support the festival. A statement from Chief Sam Douglas, a member of the organizing committee in 1977, reveals how important the contest was for the festival: "The princess candidates are the real workers as far as the festival is concerned."[7]

Families and wider communities got involved by helping their particular princess candidate to raise money.[8] Selling raffle tickets for cash prizes that were drawn during the festival was the main means of securing the title of princess.[9] A popular way to maximize sales was event organizing. For instance, Louise Kaarsmacher explained that when she ran for princess in 1971 she had a sponsor, Chief Ritchie Malloway, who organized dances where he introduced her to the public and gave her the opportunity to sell tickets.[10]

Candidates and their families also came up with different ways to raise money, like garage sales, cake sales, and bottle collecting. Jennifer Campbell reported that when she was a contestant in 1990, her community organized a mud bog, where there were also food trucks and other stands that sold all sorts of things.[11] Denise Douglas highlighted that the families who had more developed social networks typically sold more tickets. But the non-Indigenous community was also key, and in that regard the stereotype of the classic Pocahontas-style princess was a big draw. "White people bought a lot [of tickets]—they liked Indian princesses," Denise explained.[12]

According to Inez Louis, there was a lot of learning involved in this process. "I realize I learned so much about what is a raffle, and keeping track of all the money, and having to be social, and ask people to buy tickets, and speak to them about it—'This is what the raffle is for, this is when it's going to be drawn, why am I selling these tickets, I'm running for the princess'—and so I really learned a lot of social skills from that. And really a lot of hustle." She also talked about the

Maretta Beger (née Maretta Mussell Matheson)

Princess in 1980

In 1980 I thought it was kind of exciting and scary at the time. Because I was kind of shy.

I think it was just an honour to do it, to help the festival raise money. It was fun.

I guess maybe it was important. I don't like to talk about it very much. It's just … not embarrassing, but … I'm not sure how to say it. And to stay humble about my contribution to the festival.

It was all about helping the festival to be successful, to bring our nations to come together and visit and compete in canoe races of all ages and gender. To play Slahal, or the bone game, was exciting and fun to watch, listen to drumming and songs. Nations would sell their crafts; food tents would be set up for the whole weekend. It was two days of fun, hard work, visiting, playing, and competing. Memories I will cherish.

Jennifer Campbell (née Jennifer Tommy)

Princess in 1990

It was very emotional. I remember being shocked and teared up when they announced my name. Because I was like, "Oh, wow." I didn't think it was possible. It was quite an honour. It was the first time I ever felt a real connection and then also a responsibility to the Stó:lō people. It is a pivotal point where I learned there was more to me that I was not aware of and then was able to develop my Stó:lō self.

As a child I went to a Pentecostal Christian school and wasn't immersed in the culture but lived on reserve and had a different take on life in general. And in 1990 my family asked me if I wanted to participate in the contest. It was really important to my dad at that time; he wanted me to learn about our culture and my history because that wasn't a big part of my life at that time …

I think it's a great experience for any young person to participate in, and I think it's a great opportunity for them to really lean on their family and see what they can do together. It's great for young women and young men because it's a leadership role, probably the first leadership role that you step into at that age. It's an opportunity to learn to be selfless and to give back and to know there's so much more to our culture, our people. And that we're not just Stó:lō, we're Coast Salish, to travel and participate with other communities and build a network. It's a great experience.

important support from her family and from those in her community. "Having people put their confidence in me, that I could represent them, their family, our family in a good way. So it gave me an opportunity to be in a position to be supported, believed in.[13]

Jennifer Campbell highlighted similar things. "Probably my favourite part of it is watching how our family came together to support me. And that wasn't just Cheam First Nation. It was Sumas First Nation as well. There was a lot of support between a lot of the other communities … And my dad's soccer team was a big supporter as well. It was really neat to see how everybody just kind of came together and worked on this one common goal for me."[14]

In the majority of the earlier editions, princesses were judged almost exclusively by the amount of money they were able to raise. But in the 1990s other criteria began to be included. Every girl had to wear traditional regalia and give a speech by which they were judged.[15] About her experience, Inez Louis, crowned the princess in 1995, said "And so my parents, of course, helped me with that. And your speech [is done] in a traditional

Chiefs Richard Malloway and Albert Douglas (circa 1960).

way: you always have to introduce yourself, who you are, who your family is, and where you come from. And that's important to demonstrate that you know your ancestry and where you come from."[16]

As for the girls' clothing, they were required to wear handmade regalia. In the past they would usually use buckskin dresses, beads, and feathers—items more traditionally associated with Indigenous people from farther east. In later decades, these were replaced by woven cedar bark skirts made according to the Stó:lō tradition.[17]

The princess

On the big day, the girls walked around the grounds of the festival wearing their regalia and introducing themselves to attendants.[18] In the 1990s, speeches were made by all girls before the winner was finally chosen, but in earlier years, only the named princess would give a speech.[19] Upon announcement of the winner, the princess used to be crowned with a handmade Plains-style feather headdress and usually won a prize, which could be either jewellery or cash.[20] Later, more traditional Stó:lō headgear consisting of cedar bark and feathers was used, although some had worn tiaras.

After the crowning, the princess walked around the beach, greeted people, and was photographed. The second (and last) day, she was expected to return in her regalia to the festival, meet with people there, and participate in the dance.[21]

The princess was usually expected to participate in various events in the area throughout the year. She often attended openings and participated in parades and other festivals wearing her regalia and headdress.[22] In the words of Jennifer Campbell, who was crowned in 1990, becoming a princess meant "the honour and obligation of going to different events throughout the Coast Salish territory representing the Stó:lō people.[23]

Cultural shift and female empowerment

In the 1990s there was a shift in the princess contest. Aside from the important financial support for the Cultus Lake Indian Festival, the contest focused more on promoting Stó:lō culture. Girls who signed up were expected to represent not only their family and community, but also Stó:lō people and Stó:lō culture as a whole.

Since the Canadian government's anti-Potlatch law was lifted in 1951, Stó:lō people worked hard to rebuild their culture and revive traditions. The Cultus Lake princess contest was part of this effort. Inez Louis said it had been a "learning process for everybody." And Jennifer Campbell added "that just goes to show how we've actually reconnected with who we are as Stó:lō people too. It's just us trying to find our culture again,

Inez Louis (née Inez Point)

Princess in 1995

This pageant gave me the opportunity to speak in front of the public, to know that I have power and agency. I can say for the first time and acknowledge that this pageant helped me with that. And it still helps me. That I was "stood up" in front of a large group of people that have travelled from around the entire Pacific Northwest in the entire paddling community and stood me up and acknowledged me as a hard-working young woman. That I'm important, that I am worthy of respect and to encourage me to bring that forward to my community and family.

You become a public servant—I guess that's the only way in English that I can say that—in a cultural way by being your best self. And that's a tough journey. That's the way we were raised in our family. "You have to grow up and help our culture survive. Our language is dying." And all these things. That's a tough thing to be told as a young person, but that's the reality that we face. It's a lot of pressure. But with this kind of activity, that's a little bit more lighthearted—it makes it fun.

and it took us a few years. But we're finally getting back to it."

In addition, the contest also became a space where young Stó:lō women began to discuss whether they were being stereotyped and objectified, or whether the experience of competing to be princess was an empowering opportunity that allowed them to demonstrate their skills and strength in the context of feminism and the empowered role of women. While Denise Douglas was excited to represent her family and participate in the princess contest in 1970, with the passage of time she's come to see it as "controversial from a feminist perspective … Yes, I see a thread of cultural revitalization in the girls' discourse, but in fact what were they learning?" Indeed, for Douglas, the competition represented both positive and negative elements. Today, as an Elder, she is especially worried that "competing to be a princess perpetuates for our young people the value of 'shaking our feathers' for onlookers."

For Inez Louis, however, princess competitions do not perpetuate the princess stereotype. Instead, they are an opportunity to encourage young women to become examples for their communities: "I see this story being told as one of the evolution of reclaiming a way to hold up our women. Because traditionally Stó:lō is a matriarchal society. So giving power and agency back to women through young women is so important. Teaching women to be respected first within our own community. And then those women maybe can go out into society first by carrying themselves in a good way, raising their families in a good way, and being model citizens by being themselves." As such, the Cultus Lake princess contest, for over 30 years,represented more than just a shift towards a Stó:lō cultural revival. It was also a powerful statement about female empowerment and a critical reflection on gendered stereotypes.

Juliana Schneider Medeiros is a Brazilian historian, and the original research for this article was conducted as part of the Stó:lō Ethnohistory Fieldschool, organized by the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Victoria, and the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Center. The work was carried out with the support of CNPq, Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation from Brazil.

Endnotes

1. The Cultus Lake Indian Festival is now called the Cultus Lake Water Sports-War Canoe Races.
2. See "Indian Festival at Lake Next Week," *Chilliwack Progress*, May 28, 1958, p. 15; and Maretta Beger, interview by Juliana Medeiros and Kristina Celli, Chilliwack, BC, May 22, 2019, transcript, Stó:lō Archives, Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Chilliwack, BC.
3. Louise Kaarsmacher, interview by Juliana Medeiros and Jill Levine, Chilliwack, BC, May 21, 2019, transcript, Stó:lō Archives, Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Chilliwack, BC.
4. John Dewhirst, "Coast Salish Summer Festivals: Rituals for Upgrading Social Identity," *Anthropologica* 18, no. 2 (1976): 231–73; Inez Louis, interview by Juliana Medeiros and Harris Ford, Chilliwack, BC, May 22, 2019, transcript, Stó:lō Archives, Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre, Chilliwack, BC.
5. After the turn of the century, the princess contest underwent changes and some years was not hosted at all.
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23. Jennifer Campbell interview.

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Lucy Bell Receives Reconciliation Award

By Stacey Brzostowski

Originally published in the *Haida Gwaii News* on November 22, 2024. The *Haida Gwaii News* is published by Stacey Brzostowski. When Black Press closed the offices of the *Haida Gwaii Observer* on Haida Gwaii, Brzostowski and Andrew Hudson started the *Haida Gwaii News* as an independent newspaper. To support the *Haida Gwaii News*, visit Patreon: patreon.com/HaidaGwaiiNews.

Sdahl K̲'awaas, Lucy Bell, recipient of the British Columbia Reconciliation Award, is a dedicated advocate for repatriation and the dismantling of systemic racism within cultural institutions. Four years after resigning from her position at the Royal BC Museum in protest over its deep-rooted discriminatory practices, Bell continues to address the same systemic issues that prompted her departure. Now pursuing a PhD focused on the racism she witnessed in the museum sector, Bell also remains committed to repatriating Haida ancestors and artifacts, recognizing that cultural healing is a central part of reconciliation.

The British Columbia Reconciliation Award, presented by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor in partnership with the BC Achievement Foundation, honours individuals and organizations who demonstrate exceptional leadership in advancing reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Bell was one of six award recipients including Phyllis Webstad, who is known for her role in the Orange Shirt Day movement, which raises awareness about the legacy of residential schools.

Bell's work, both in her academic research and in the field of repatriation, serves as a reminder that true reconciliation requires more than symbolic gestures—it demands sustained action and responsibility. "I never knew my calling would be to work with the dead," she said. "It's important to do the work with yahguudang/respect."

When Bell, who is from Old Massett, spoke with *Haida Gwaii News*, she was preparing to carry Tamara Davidson's copper for Davidson's swearing-in as a member of the provincial legislature (MLA for North Coast-Haida Gwaii).

Bell explained that the award is bittersweet, as it is tied to her public resignation from the Royal BC Museum. Her resignation sparked significant investigations and reforms within the museum sector, but Bell says that the same systemic issues persist. Although the museum plans to host a healing ceremony to make amends, Bell remains unconvinced that such an event will lead to real accountability or healing, given the ongoing racist behaviours within the institution.

Bell has transformed the pain of her experiences into an incredible journey of healing. She has refocused her PhD studies on examining the systemic racism she witnessed while working in the museum sector. "In the early days, it didn't seem like the museums wanted to see us at all. We went in there with the attitude that we were going to be friends no matter what." While changes have been made in museums to address this attitude towards First Nations peoples it is far from perfect, she explained. There are issues that have been highlighted from all around the world when it comes to museums and the behaviours and attitudes towards minority and oppressed populations.

Closer to home, Bell says she is very proud of the work the Haida Gwaii Museum does and how much it has accomplished under Nika Collison's guidance.

Find out more about the work of the Haida Gwaii Museum at the museum's website, haidagwaiimuseum.ca/.

Stacey Brzostowski (née Marple) is a founder, editor, and driving force behind *Haida Gwaii News*. Her commitment to accessible journalism ensures the publication remains free for all residents, fostering an informed and connected community.

Stacey's career began under her maiden name, where she gained recognition for her investigative reporting. In 2016, she received a Ma Murray Award for her groundbreaking series on funeral services on Haida Gwaii.

Beyond her editorial work, Stacey actively contributes to local life, serving as vice-president of the Tlell Community Association and supporting initiatives that strengthen the community spirit of Haida Gwaii.

Sdahl K̲’awaas, Lucy Bell, PhD (ABD)

The British Columbia Reconciliation Award recognizes extraordinary individuals and organizations who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, respect, and commitment to furthering reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the province of British Columbia, or inspired others to continue reconciliation efforts. Learn more about the BC Reconciliation Award recipients; visit the BC Achievement Foundation website, bcachievement.com/award/british-columbia-reconciliation-award-2024/, or the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia’s website, ltgov.bc.ca/priority-programs/the-bc-reconciliation-award/.

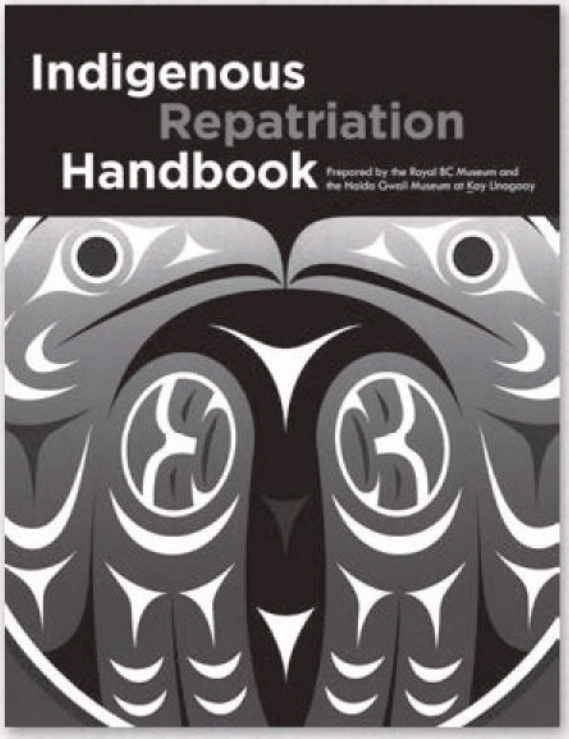
Watchmen, Skyáanaa ‘la’áaylang, stand atop Haida poles, watching for visitors and for danger. Lucy Bell, Sdahl K̲’awaas has served as a Watchman in the museum world, advocating for reconciliation, repatriation, and anti-racism.

As a founding member of the Haida Repatriation Committee, she has spent nearly 30 years helping return over 500 ancestral remains to Haida Gwaii, guided by Yahgudang (Respect), and reconnecting the Haida with their 12,000 belongings in global museums.

As the inaugural Head of Indigenous Collections and Repatriation at the Royal BC Museum (RBCM), Lucy advanced reconciliation, co-authored the *Indigenous Repatriation Handbook*, and pushed for systemic change despite facing institutional racism. Her public resignation led to a year-long investigation and significant changes in the museum sector. She received the Sterling Prize for Controversy for speaking out against racism. Lucy will soon host a Haida Tla Yahda (Making it right) ceremony with the RBCM for closure, and to receive an apology in a Haida way.

Lucy continues to speak out for reconciliation and justice in the heritage field, advising the BC Museums Association, and the Canadian Museums Association. Her co-authored *From Stealing to Healing Report* on repatriation costs and benefits for First Peoples’ Cultural Council is a first of its kind in Canada.

Lucy is passionate about protecting and supporting her daughter and other upcoming museologists. She co-created a UVic course on decolonizing museums and co-founded Indigenous Museum Cousins. Her forthcoming dissertation will show how the Haida reconcile and work with museums.



See Lucy Bell talk about her work and the Sterling Prize in 2021 in this SFU news story: sfu.ca/publicsquare/events/2021/2021-sterling-prize.html.

Hagwilnekhlh Ron A. Mitchell, Chief of Cinegh Lhay Yikh (House of Many Eyes) in Likhsilyu (Frog Clan), addresses Witsuwit'en delegates during a ceremonial gathering in front of the K'ëgit totem pole at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris, France, in October 2024. Photo: Mélanie H. Morin

RECONNECTING TO WITSUWIT'EN HISTORY

Restoring Relations with the K'ëgit Totem Pole

A khiyt (winter) dispatch from Witsuwit'en yintah (territories)

Hagwilnekhlh Ron Mitchell, Dzïggot Ron Austin, 'Ilhdesinon Birdy Markert, We'es Tes Sandra Martin Harris, Jean Matheson, Diana Wilson, Toni Michell, Drew Harris, Helen Harris, Tyler McCreary, Joanne Connauton, Mélanie H. Morin

In October 2024, a delegation of Witsuwit'en hereditary chiefs, elders, artists, and youth embarked on an emotional and historic journey to Paris, France. Their goal was to reconnect with a significant piece of their cultural heritage—the K'ëgit totem pole belonging to C'idimsggin'ïs, housed at the Quai Branly Museum.

This journey, deeply rooted in cultural revitalization and healing, was an opportunity to see and honour the totem pole that was taken from Witsuwit'en lands in 1938. For many of the delegation members, this trip was more than just a visit; it was a powerful act of reclamation and a step towards strengthening their connection to their ancestors and cultural identity.

A history of displacement

In 1938, surrealist artist Kurt Seligmann travelled to British Columbia, seeking to purchase a Northwest Coast Indigenous totem pole. After corresponding with anthropologist Marius Barbeau, he learned of the K'ëgit pole, one of the oldest and most intricately carved poles, which stood in the Witsuwit'en village of Tsë Cakh (Hagwilget). Despite the significance of the pole to Witsuwit'en cultural and spiritual identity, the local Indian Agent pressured Likhsilyu House Chief Hagwilnekhlh Arthur Michell and his relatives into selling it for a mere $100.

The pole was taken down, broken into pieces, and shipped by train and boat to Paris. After being reassembled, it was first displayed outside the Musée de l'Homme (Museum of Man). In 2001, it was further restored and transferred to the Quai Branly Museum, where it now resides inside near the visitor information desk.

For Hagwilnekhlh Ron Mitchell, the current House Chief of C'inegh Lhay Yikh, the trip was bittersweet. "It's quite emotional when I think about our people. I will be happy to see the totem pole and a part of our house and chief's history, but sad at the same time. I was disheartened when I heard that they took it apart to move it. They should never have done that without understanding what it means to our people."

The delegation, including Witsuwit'en chiefs, elders, artists, and youth, as well as researchers and educators, reconnects with the K'ëgit totem pole 86 years after its removal. *Back row:* **Dzïggot Ron Austin & Tyler McCreary.** *Middle row:* **Brad Markert, Hagwilnekhlh Ron Mitchell, 'Ilhdesinon Birdy Markert, We'es Tes Sandra Martin Harris, Jean Matheson, Joanne Connauton, & Diana Wilson.** *Front row:* **Mélanie H. Morin, Drew Harris, Toni Michell, and Helen Harris.**

Photo: Mélanie H. Morin

Youth perspectives: reconnecting and rediscovering

For many of the youth on the trip, this experience was transformative. It allowed them to see firsthand the impact of colonization on their heritage while also inspiring them to deepen their connection to their language and traditions.

Diana Wilson, one of the youth delegates, reflected on the sense of unity created during the trip: "I have been working on learning the Witsuwit'en language and culture, and never dreamed I'd be invited to go on a trip like this with my people. We all became so much like a family crew."

For Drew Harris, the journey sparked a newfound commitment to her cultural identity. "I wasn't very involved in learning about my Witsuwit'en lineage, and this experience has motivated me to do so," she shared.

In addition to visiting the Quai Branly Museum, the group also took the opportunity to visit the Eiffel Tower and Juno Beach. These are sites deeply connected to Witsuwit'en war veterans, who participated in the liberation of France only to find themselves sleeping in the park beneath the Eiffel Tower after being denied access to accommodations in Paris on the basis of their race. Jean Matheson expressed gratitude for these experiences, stating, "It was great to have the additional opportunity to visit the Eiffel Tower and Juno Beach, as it connects to our Witsuwit'en history and war veterans."

The emotional reunion with K'ëgit

Master Carver Dzïggot Ron Austin, who has long dreamed of seeing the K'ëgit pole, was deeply moved by the reunion. "It's an amazing opportunity to see the pole that may have belonged to my grandmother's older brother, C'idimsggin'ïs. It means a lot as an artist to see what my ancestors created before me in person."

The Witsuwit'en delegation members prepare for a ceremony to honour Witsuwit'en veterans at Juno Beach in Normandy, France.

Photo: Toni Michell

Hagwilnekhlh Ron A. Mitchell and Dzïggot Ron Austin stand solemnly during K'ëgit totem pole ceremony.
Photo: Mélanie H. Morin

For Toni Michell, the experience was overwhelmingly emotional. "It was such an emotional experience being reunited with K'ëgit, and we need to return K'ëgit back to our homelands. K'ëgit has been away far too long."

Even after the delegation left, the connection to the totem pole remained strong. Helen Harris reflected on her farewell to K'ëgit: "Since saying nenyust'ën' (see you later), I've been sending K'ëgit love from across the ocean."

Ts'akë ze' 'Ilhdesinon Birdy Markert also experienced a shift in perspective during the trip. "When we first began this voyage, I was set on keeping the pole where it was and to begin a cross-cultural exchange, but when I came face to face with K'ëgit, I knew I wanted its return."

Restoring relations and revitalizing culture

The delegation's visit to the Quai Branly Museum was not just about seeing the totem pole; it was about reclaiming Witsuwit'en history and restoring cultural connections that had been severed by colonial forces. Ts'akë ze' We'es Tes Sandra Martin Harris emphasized the significance of totem poles in Witsuwit'en identity: "Our stories shared on ts'an (totem poles) are such an integral part of our crests, names, identity, and connection to the yintah (territories) in our Clans, House Groups, and villages. We did not get to witness its life force while it stood firmly on the land for all to witness."

The trip was made possible through collaboration between the Likhsilyu Clan, Kyah Wiget Education Society, Florida State University, York University, Bulkley Valley Museum, and School District 54 (Bulkley Valley). Funding was generously provided by the Wetzin'kwa Community Forest Corporation, British Columbia Network Environment for Indigenous Health Research, and Bulkley Valley Community Foundation.

Looking to the future

The delegation's visit was a powerful reminder of the resilience of Witsuwit'en culture and the importance of ongoing efforts to revitalize traditions, language, and identity. The trip not only strengthened intergenerational connections but also sparked important conversations about cultural restitution and the future of the K'ëgit pole.

While the pole remains in Paris for now, the bonds rekindled between the delegation and their heritage signal a future where Witsuwit'en culture continues to thrive, especially songs, stories, and language. As the youth who travelled to Paris returned home, they bring with them a renewed sense of purpose and pride in their identity—and a deepened commitment to ensuring that the stories of their ancestors, carved into totem poles like K'ëgit, are never forgotten.

Delegation Members

Hagwilnekhlh **Ron Mitchell, Witsuwit'en Head Chief of Cinegh Lhay Yikh of Likhsilyu and Witsuwit'en Language Instructor.**

Dzïggot **Ron Austin, Witsuwit'en Chief in Cinegh Lhay Yikh of Likhsilyu and Witsuwit'en Artist.**

'Ilhdesinon **Birdy Markert, Witsuwit'en Matriarch in Cinegh Lhay Yikh of Likhsilyu and District Principal of Indigenous Education for School District 54.**

We'es Tes **Sandra Martin Harris, Witsuwit'en Matriarch in Cinegh Lhay Yikh of Likhsilyu and Indigenous Focusing-Orientated Therapy (IFOT) and Reiki Practitioner.**

Jean Matheson, Witsuwit'en Member of C'inegh Lhay Yikh in Likhsilyu and Witsuwit'en Language Learner.

Diana Wilson, Witsuwit'en Member of Cas Yikh in Gidimt'en and Witsuwit'en Language Learner.

Toni Michell, Witsuwit'en Member of C'inegh Lhay Yikh in Likhsilyu and Witsuwit'en Language Learner.

Drew Harris, Witsuwit'en Member of C'inegh Lhay Yikh in Likhsilyu.

Helen Harris, Witsuwit'en Member of Tsë Kal Kiyikh in Likhsilyu, Community Language & Culture Department Coordinator for Kyah Wiget Education Society, and Witsuwit'en Language Learner.

Tyler McCreary, PhD, Associate Professor in Department of Geography at Florida State University.

Joanne Connauton, MA, Member of Wahnapitae First Nation and PhD candidate in Department of Geography at Florida State University.

Mélanie H. Morin, Bulkley Valley Museum Staff Researcher.

Current Keyohwhudachun, Petra A'huille *(centre),* **with two of her daughters, Charlotte Munroe** *(left)* **and Seraphine Munroe** *(right),* **moments after opening the Maiyoo Keyoh exhibition opening.** Photograph by James Doyle.

"My Precious"

Museum collections and repatriation of cultural objects

Chad Hellenius, Assistant Curator, The Exploration Place

Repatriation has become something of a buzzword in the media these days; however, it's important to move past empty words when we have these conversations. As Jordan Coble from the Sncewips Heritage Museum summarized, "Repatriation is not just a word, but a call to action."[1]

Some in the general public might be confused as to why it is so important for museums to return cultural objects to the communities to which they belong. After all, aren't museums safeguarding these cultural treasures and doing a valuable service by educating the masses about various cultures around the globe? Well, the truth of the matter is yes—sometimes, sort of—but all too often, the answer is, sadly, a resounding no. More importantly, it's essential to keep in mind how these pieces of people's culture were obtained in the first place and how they are presented to the public.

Museums and colonialism

For many of us who work in museums and love what they can be for the communities they serve, the sad and undeniable reality is that museums have their roots in colonialism. With colonialism came land surveyors, missionaries, anthropologists, fur traders, botanists, and a slew of other scientists and settlers who collected

Indigenous belongings with wild abandon.[2] The justification for creating these collections was based on the notion of salvage ethnography, which specified that Indigenous material culture and stories must be collected for science because they were on the verge of disappearing.[3]

However, motivations for the collection of Indigenous cultural objects can't be viewed as a completely noble scientific exercise for the benefit of humanity. There was definitely fame and fortune to be had by collectors and museums alike. Much of this collecting was occurring at a time when traditional cultural ceremonies were being banned and Canada's residential school system was being enacted.[4] Therefore, museums became a cog in the colonial machine and, in a way, worked to separate Indigenous communities from their traditions.

The Tsik'usdzai (headdress) belonging to the Keyohwhudachun (head of the keyoh) of the Maiyoo Keyoh provides an important lesson on the dark history of the collection of cultural objects in British Columbia. This history illustrates a prime example of the dubious motivations of a notable collector, which has led to the loss of context for this cultural item. This case ultimately raises a very important question. Namely, is the preservation of a cultural object more important than the preservation of the knowledge systems represented by that cultural object? In other words, have museums become so obsessed with conserving things that we've lost focus on what's really important?

The Maiyoo Keyoh

The Dakelh territory of Central British Columbia is divided into keyohs, which predate colonization and the colonial creation of First Nations (formally known as "Indian Bands"). It is important to realize that keyoh owners have never ceded their lands to First Nations, or to provincial and federal governments.

"The *keyoh* is defined by specific boundaries, ownership, and authority. Ownership of the *keyoh* rests in the chief or noble, the head of his large extended family that uses the keyoh. The chief (*keyohwhudachun*) directs and manages the *keyoh* on behalf of his extended family, which consists of smaller nuclear families."[5]

Our Lady of Good Hope church on *Nak'al Bun* (Stuart Lake), in the village of *Nak'azdli Whut'en*. This was Father Morice's base of operations for missionary work. N993.11.1.7096.5

Photograph by Wally West

The Maiyoo Keyoh have a strong attachment to their land and continue to be keepers of Indigenous traditions and the management of their keyoh. The Tsik'usdzai is the physical symbol of hereditary title by the Keyohwhudachun over the territory and the responsibility of stewardship. It is made from 499 two-ply, twisted tresses of human hair from the keyoh's women of nobility, and from whale baleen, depilated skin, plant fibre, sinew, and dentalium shells.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Keyohwhudachun George A'Huille wore the headdress as a symbol of his title. By the late nineteenth century, Father Morice, an Oblate Mary Immaculate missionary, had acquired it and donated it to what would become the Royal Ontario Museum, (ROM), curiously without acknowledging whom it came from.[6] This may have been intentional, as Father Morice craved power among the Dakelh people he missioned to, and he took it upon himself to settle disputes over territory while ridiculing the traditional political systems of the Dakelh.[7] Morice went so far as to refuse to take confession from participants in *balhats* (potlatch).[8]

Father Morice also portrayed himself as a leading Americanist ethnographer and explorer of a great wild frontier, with collections of cultural objects and then donations to prestigious museums that likely contributed greatly to his reputation.[9] This was especially true if the missionary could regale the masses with tales of converting the "pagan natives" to Christianity and forcing them to give up paraphernalia of their idolatry.

Illustration by Father Morice of George A'huille wearing the headdress in the 1890s.

By removing the headdress from the keyoh and stripping it of its heritage, Father Morice detached it from its context. The stories of people and their stewardship of the land weren't told, and the headdress was reduced to an "artifact" central to the ROM's Indigenous gallery. Beautiful, yes, but it had lost all of its meaning, and the public was deprived of learning about the headdress's significance. Unfortunately, this is a common story in museums worldwide; cultural materials are sanitized of their history and life, reduced to being merely neat things on display without meaning.[10]

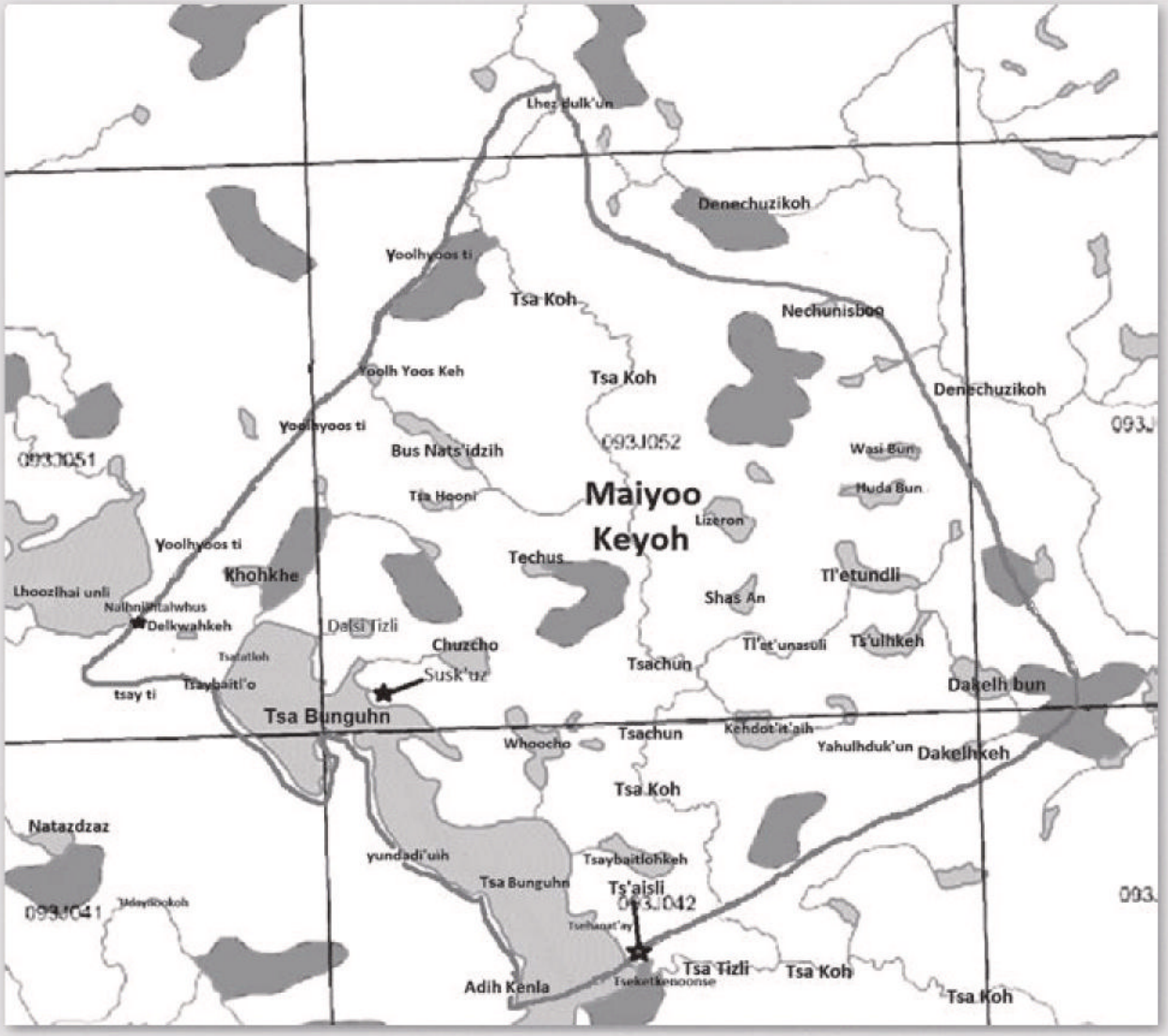
Conclusion

In a perfect world, museums would repatriate collections that have been taken from communities, and it would be up to the community what happens to them. If these objects are to be displayed, it is the community who knows the stories and how to handle and display these items with proper respect. Yes, this may mean *not* wearing gloves.

On the other hand, maybe the object should be used by the community for its intended purpose and allowed to live out its life, and then a new object should be prepared, therefore preserving the knowledge and not our sterilized concept of the thing.[11] Either way, it's the community that the cultural object came from who should be in control of this decision.

At the very least, curators need to open their vaults to communities so that they know what is being held. All too often, cultural objects lack provenance and get relegated to general terms of little meaning, like "subarctic" and "Athapaskan," which lack any real context. By opening up these collections, we can learn more about the stories behind these cultural objects, such as who made them, why they made them, and what they truly mean. It just takes asking, being willing to listen, and readiness to hear that we were wrong.

The title of this article is a bit of an inside joke at The Exploration Place. When we're talking about repatriation and the many museums unwilling to return cultural objects to their communities, we're comparing these curators and their collections to Gollum from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and his murderous obsession with the One Ring, and we all know how that story ended.



A map showing the boundaries of the Maiyoo Keyoh with toponyms in Dakelh. Map courtesy of the Maiyoo Keyoh.

Chad Hellenius is the assistant curator at The Exploration Place and enjoys finding and telling the fascinating stories behind seemingly everyday events and people.

Endnotes

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Repatriation and Reconciliation as Basic Heritage Operations

By Leia Patterson

Leia Patterson is the Reconciliation Resource Advisor for the BC Museums Association, and we have invited her into this space to share her thoughts about how small museums and heritage organizations can begin to do the work of creating authentic relationships that broaden and deepen the stories they tell.

Museums, heritage sites, and other collections-holding institutions have always held on to the physical to tell the stories of people and society. I encourage all organizations to consider who your stories highlight, and who your collections and archives are providing context for. I hope that this article provides some starting points for ways to think about incorporating reconciliation considerations into core operations.

Think within the work being done

When you think about the constraints in your work and in your attempts to integrate priorities like equity, emergency management, diversity, or environmental considerations, I would wager that the constraints working against you come down to three things: time, people, and money.

We work hard in the arts, culture and heritage sector. It can be overwhelming to consider anything beyond the scope of work already being done at an organization. So instead of thinking of adding new priorities, I encourage you to think within the work already being done. The truth is that many of the priorities mentioned above are not separate from existing operations and projects but are ways of thinking that should be incorporated into existing operations. Some activities fit together: consider reconciliation and repatriation as you look carefully at your collection or exhibition, or as you review policy. Thinking about making changes and acknowledging what is missing or unknown are activities that go hand in hand. There is significance in being willing to open conversations with others, and these conversations can be part of regular operations.

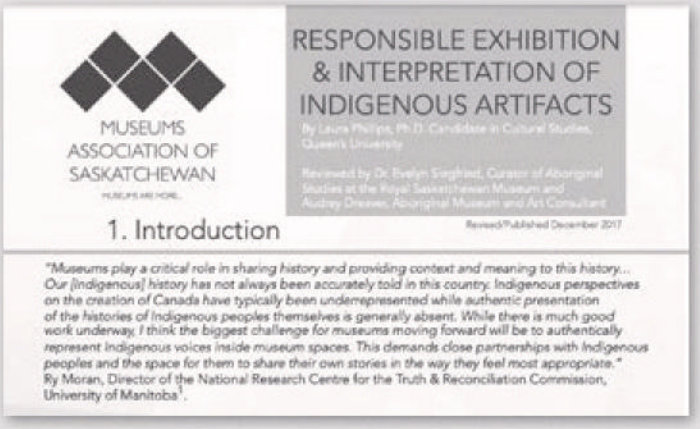
The suggestions and guiding questions that I have outlined below show how regular museum practices can be opportunities to consider, and create space for conversation around, repatriation and reconciliation.

Develop exhibits and interpretation

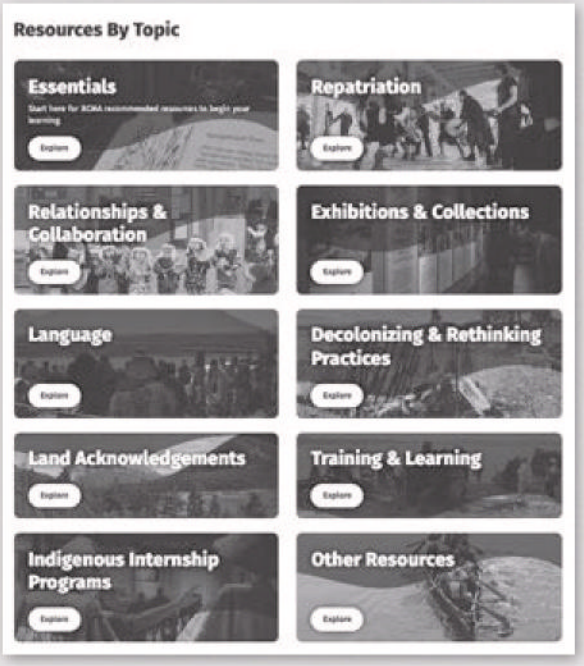
In reviewing, planning, or preparing current or upcoming exhibitions and programs, question the dynamics of your work. Are there Indigenous voices represented in your storytelling or in your education programs? If not, where can you add and begin to show Indigenous contributions and history that connect to your mandate? (Hint: If you think there isn't a connection, look at the big picture of history first, and then look at local connections.)

For example, if you work at a military museum, is there discussion about Indigenous enfranchisement and its impacts on Indigenous people volunteering for military service or about the lack of recognition of Indigenous veterans and barriers to necessary healthcare when they returned? Do you recognize Indigenous Veterans Day?

Perhaps you run a historic townsite. Where are the Indigenous community members and stories about them across the time periods you present? What allowed or didn't allow their participation in local economies or education at the time? How did/do Indigenous people in the area you interpret make a living or take


MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN
RESPONSIBLE EXHIBITION & INTERPRETATION OF INDIGENOUS ARTIFACTS
1. Introduction
"Museums play a critical role in sharing history and providing context and meaning to this history... Our [Indigenous] history has not always been accurately told in this country. Indigenous perspectives on the creation of Canada have typically been underrepresented while authentic presentation of the histories of Indigenous peoples themselves is generally absent. While there is much good work underway, I think the biggest challenge for museums moving forward will be to authentically represent Indigenous voices inside museum spaces. This demands close partnerships with Indigenous peoples and the space for them to share their own stories in the way they feel most appropriate."
Ry Moran, Director of the National Research Centre for the Truth & Reconciliation Commission, University of Manitoba[1].

The Museums Association of Saskatchewan has compiled a resource guide to important questions. Find their publication *Responsible Exhibition and Interpretation of Indigenous Artifacts* at saskmuseums.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/WEB_-_Responsible_Exhibition_and_Interpretation_of_Indigenous_Artifacts_v_2.pdf.



Find out more about making space for Indigenous protocols on the webinar "Challenging Ideology: Looking at Historical Museum Practices Through an Indigenous Lens," available on the BCMA website: museum.bc.ca/brain/challenging-ideology-looking-at-historical-museum-practices-through-an-indigenous-lens/.

Find out more on the BCMA podcast episode "Pausing to Decolonize: Decolonizing Museum Policy and Practice": museum.bc.ca/brain/pausing-to-decolonize-decolonizing-museum-policy-and-practice/.

The FPCC's *Recognizing and Including Indigenous Cultural Heritage in BC* sourcebook can be found on the FPCC website: museum.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/FPCC-ICH-Policy-Paper-EN-200825-WEB.pdf.

BCMA's CARE workbook, titled *Relationship Building,* can be found on the BCMA website:museum.bc.ca/brain/candid-actionable-reconciliation-education-care-for-museums/.

Find the CMA's offering "The Decolonization of Museum Education," by Tania Muir, at museums.ca/site/reportsandpublications/museonline/winter2024/DecolonizationMuseumEducation.

care of their families? Where did/do they live? It's important that you consider these questions: erasure via non-representation of these stories is no longer acceptable practice.

If you run educations programs, the First Nations Education Steering Committee offers resources to help incorporate Indigenous perspectives inside the objectives of the BC K–12 curriculum. If part of the local history is understanding the legacy of residential schools, read Anna McKenzie's article in to learn how to talk to children about residential schools.

Work with collections

Perhaps your site does a regular collections audit, has adaptable database systems, an archive, or an existing process for taking donations and providing research assistance. As you go through regular collections processes, consider what changes could be made, what information might be gathered, and what information others would find helpful. For example, your archive may hold materials related to residential schools that would be helpful for community research, so find ways to share them. You can learn more from the BC Museums Association (BCMA) webinar called "Residential School Response: How Museums and Archives Can Provide Support."

Think about your collections from a lens of empathy and care: Do communities and families know that you have these belongings or archival materials? What were the historical and ethical contexts in which the objects were taken or given up? What path did these items take to end up at your organization? When you audit collections or bring in new items, ask deep questions and include these themes in your research as you think about these historical considerations.

Remember the people

Have you shared a staff member's name online that Indigenous communities can reach out to, to discuss any ancestors or belongings that are held, or who can assist with the community's research requests? Having a specific person can help create a sense of connection to the organization that will make community connection easier.

If you have ancestral remains or burial goods in storage (note: they should not be on display), ensure you are communicating their presence before Indigenous folks are entering rooms that contain them. It is emotional for Indigenous communities to be visiting your collections to begin with, so give warning about ancestors and belongings that are in your care before the visit. This ensures that necessary cultural protocols can be planned for and followed on the visit. You might also have to adapt your policies to enable the community to care for their heritage in their own way (limiting access, allowing food in a storage area, allowing practices like smudging or brushing).

Review and refine policy

When thinking about the operation of their museum or heritage site, folks often look for examples of good policies to copy, but a policy should be as unique as the site. Here are some questions to ask as you undertake your regular policy review:

- Is photography of Indigenous belongings allowed?
- Could Indigenous admissions be free?
- Could fees for research be waived for Indigenous community researchers?
- What is ownership and how is it defined?
- Is there privacy for sacred belongings, and what rules are in place for accessing those items?
- Is there transparency about policies and the forms used for repatriation, donation, loans, fees, et cetera, and can these be publicly available to ensure communication is clear with possible donors and Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members?

Strategic planning

As you plan and advocate for your organization and site, consider how you engage with the broader community and how you represent your organization to the public and to partners. Is your commitment to representation distilled in your organizational values and objectives? Equity initiatives and reconciliation work can be built into all aspects of the work that your site does. If you do any advocacy work, or chair committees, or are planning for the future, working to build relationships now will support a more collaborative approach and meet diverse community needs and priorities within the scope of your work.

Staff, board, and volunteer training

When onboarding your summer students, new volunteers, board members, or leadership staff, ensure that learning about — and including — local Indigenous peoples, among other equity-deserving groups in your region, is a priority. Offer board members readings about the challenges of recognizing and including Indigenous cultural heritage by visiting the First Peoples' Cultural Council's (FPCC) resource area. Learn about the history of Indigenous rights in Canada and the impact of this history on current and historical community events. Let your team know what is in the collection that you are working on, or how you have been analyzing the museum processes. Ask for feedback and ideas from fresh perspectives, or complete the BCMA's Candid Actionable Reconciliation Education (CARE) workbook together. Form a book club or film club, take online courses from experienced teachers, or read local biographies by equity-seeking community members from the region. Continue to educate yourself about the diverse history of your region and to make your interpretation and management of your site that much richer!

An invitation to explore

I hope that this article has provided some starting points for ways to think about incorporating reconciliation considerations into core operations. I encourage you to continue to learn, and to explore the BCMA resources at museum.bc.ca/. Take a look at the BCMA's Indigenous Cultural Heritage resource page or learn about our upcoming programs on our Conferences and Events page. As always, please reach out if you'd like to be pointed to specific resources or are seeking new opportunities to chat about your progress or programs!

Find these resources on education programs:

First Nations Education Steering Committee website and publications: fnesc.ca/learningfirstpeoples/

"How to Talk to Children about Residential Schools," by Anna McKenzie, *IndigiNews,* June 3, 2021, indiginews.com/okanagan/how-to-talk-to-children-about-residential-schools.

For BCMA resources on empathy and care, visit their resource webpage "For Museums, a Better Future Means Confronting Past Wrongs" at museum.bc.ca/for-museums-a-better-future-means-confronting-past-wrongs/.

See also the Canadian Museums Association report *Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums.* You'll find it here: museums.ca/site/movedtoaction.

Leia completed her undergraduate degree in Anthropology from Trent University and a post-graduate certificate in Museum & Gallery Studies from Georgian College. Leia moved from Ontario to BC in 2015 to immerse herself in repatriation work at Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre and, later, with Klahoose First Nation. In 2020, she joined the BC Museums Association, where she works with the Indigenous Advisory Committee and provides guidance and resources to BCMA members. You can contact Leia at engagement@museum.bc.ca.

View of the St. Alice Hotel, ca. 1890

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives. Major James Skitt Matthews

From Health Resort to Pleasure Resort

Reconstructing Harrison Hot Springs as a tourist destination, 1920–1930

By Lydia Kinasewich

Lydia Kinasewich was the recipient of the 2022 W. Kaye Lamb Student Scholarship from the BC Historical Federation, and this article is an excerpt from that essay. For more information on Lydia's work, see her video on the BCHF YouTube channel, tinyurl.com/BCHFKinasewich.

In the summer of 1920, a fire erupted on the roof of the St. Alice Hotel situated alongside Harrison Lake, destroying a key tourist accommodation and diminishing accessibility to the healing properties of Harrison Hot Springs. News of this fire was reported throughout the province, noting the loss of a well-known British Columbian hotel.[1] After the fire, the only attraction left for tourists at Harrison was the hot springs itself.

It became clear that with the loss of this tourist destination centred around health came a new opportunity to recast Harrison and its environmental features into a resort that provided not only healing but also leisure and recreation. Remaking Harrison Hot Springs into a pleasure resort was accomplished by building a new hotel that strove to place recreational leisure on an equal footing with the health benefits of the springs.

Land developers constructed a new hotel along the shores of Harrison Lake in 1925, and the promotors of Harrison Hot Springs in the late 1920s shifted the focus of their promotion from a destination centred on wellness to one centred on touristic pleasure. The new Harrison Hot Springs Hotel drew on the therapeutic reputation of the hot springs and on local history to construct a destination for a new age of hot spring tourism emerging out of the trends of interwar tourism in British Columbia.

This intersection between the growing scientific understanding of disease and using the natural environment as a cure contributed to a rise in promoting hot springs as a therapeutic environment that could cure disease.[2] As well, the development of hot springs as tourist destinations in North America was connected to a broader pattern of promoting geographical features

for their physical, psychological, and moral benefits.[3] Claims of healing were used to attract tourists to various parts of the world during the late nineteenth century; historians have studied how mineral springs resorts in Europe, Australia, and America used medical understanding of healing to develop tourism. In Canada, the hot springs in Banff received particular attention as a famous centre for healing and tourism starting in the 1880s. Lesser known hot springs in Canada were also of growing interest by the turn of the twentieth century, and promotors in British Columbia's nascent tourism industry used this rhetoric of health and wellness to shape hot springs into profitable business ventures.[4]

Passengers in a Harrison Hot Springs vehicle travelling down a country road in Agassiz, B.C., 1909

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives

The St. Alice Hotel Ablaze, July 1920

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives. Major James Skitt Matthews

Photograph of the new Harrison Hot Springs Hotel built in 1926, ca. 1928

Photo: City of Vancouver Archives. Major James Skitt Matthews

Hot springs remained a fashionable and desirable destination for elites who could afford the time and expense to travel to therapeutic natural environments. The interwar period in British Columbia brought a new vision for tourism, but the automobile increased accessibility and brought greater diversity to the types of tourists exploring the province. Along with these shifts, the booming 1920s also brought a changing use of tourism promotion, with private and government travel bureaus and companies like hotels and railway lines using coordinated marketing to sell the province as a destination with a diverse range of attractions. Building the Harrison Hot Springs Hotel in 1926 and stocking it with an array of recreational activities and amenities that appealed to middle-class tastes and trends exemplified the influence of the emerging tourism industry, while also maintaining the nineteenth-century image of mineral springs as a destination for healing.

Endnotes

1. "Hot Springs Hotel Destroyed," *Quesnel Cariboo Observer,* July 31, 1920, p. A1; "Health Resort Hotel Burned," *The Victoria Daily,* July 19, 1920, p. 1; "St. Alice Hotel Burned Down by Fire of Unknown Origin," *Vancouver Daily World,* July 19, 1920, p. 2.
2. Martha E. Geores, "Surviving on Metaphor: How 'Health = Hot Springs' Created and Sustained a Town," in *Putting Health into Place: Landscape, Identity, and Well-Being,* ed. Robin A. Kearns and Wilbert M. Gesler (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 36–52.
3. Caroline Lieffers, "A 'Canadian Bethesda': Reading Banff as a Health Resort, 1883–1902," *Past Imperfect* 17 (2011): 1.
4. See, for example, Milt Parent, *Halcyon, The Captain's Paradise: A History of Halcyon Hot Springs* (Nakusp: Arrow Lakes Historical Society, 2005).

Lydia Kinasewich is a master's student in history at the University of Guelph. She is interested in research on the history of health and nutrition science in Canada, particularly on food industry regulation in twentieth-century British Columbia, the history of dairying in western Canada, and how milk was promoted as a "perfect" food for the health of Canadians.

Left: **The child in this photo is Peter, our sister's second son, held by his Uncle John, circa 1983. Like most of our children, Peter watched everything that was going on. He was born right after our brother Frank passed away. In our culture, we were taught that Peter was his Uncle Frank's replacement. That, of course, meant he was loved a bit more. This is an important lesson to help deal with grief. Our mom, Kay George, demonstrated how important they were to our family, and every time she saw them, she told them she loved and hugged them. After our mom passed away, we continued to tell Peter that he was loved. He will be 42 years old this year and he does the same with his children and us. Peter's nephew, Charlie, his sister Keisha's son, is just like his Uncle Peter was when he was a child. Charlie, like his uncle, says anything that comes to his mind. This makes us smile and remember our mom's teachings.**
Right: **Kay George teaching junior high students in the Snuneymuxw longhouse, circa 1970s** Composite Image by William A. White

Ni uchxwiyunem? (Did you listen?)

By William A. White

Before beginning any significant story, Snuneymuxw sulsalewh (Elders) said, "Listen to what you are about to hear," or after speaking, "Did you hear what I said?" Our grandfather Adam Jimmy said to our mom as a child, "Tell me what I just said!"

Ni uchxwiyunem

These photographs are important, as is the term ni uchxwiyunem. They capture images and teachings I gained during work with traditional sulsalewh dating back to the 1970s. From them I began to learn that the Coast Salish world was complex, and that sulsalewh applied a very old value system called snuw'uy'ulth to assist with maintaining balance. It was applied with each generation to protect and to surround children. sulsalewh expected us to know about the complex nature of our relationships with each other and with the natural and supernatural worlds.

In preparation for writing this article, I rewatched clips from the 1990 movie *Dances with Wolves*. In the wedding scene, Dances with Wolves (Dunbar) was not listening while being lectured by Kicking Bird, who noticed the other man's inattention and said, "Have you heard all that I have said?" Our grandfather, Adam Jimmy, asked his daughter (my mother) who was just out of residential school, "Did you hear what I said?" He then said, "Tell me what I just said." When she replied in Halkomelem, "Oh dad I forgot," he told her, "I am going to pick a pinecone. Put it in your ear so what I am telling you does not fall out of the other ear!"

During the 1950s and 1960s at community meetings for funerals, marriages, and birthdays our old people rose and provided prayers and prayer songs to protect and to surround us. It is important to know, particularly for educators, that sulsalewh never rose to talk about the darkness associated with the Indian Residential School experience. Without the protection of our old people and their teachings associated with snuw'uy'ulth, it was dangerous to share that knowledge with young people because it could bring harm.

Left: **Cover of *Museum Note No.9 UBC Museum of Anthropology* by J.E. Michael Kew.** *Centre:* **Kay George (nee Jimmy), mother of William White, identified Ancestral teachings to block death.** *Right:* **Coast Salish Grave box with carved animals to visibly block the energy of death.**

UBC Museum of Anthropology; W. White photo

Protecting and surrounding us

It is critical that we imaginatively deal with the complexities of our world, rather than concentrate only on one element: the darkness, oppression, and horror of the Indian Residential School experience. Within our Coast Salish communities, opening prayers and songs are held to protect and surround community members. Today the Western legal system demands evidence, and victims are required to give testimonials to prove they were sexually or physically abused. Sadly, while the legal demands of testimony were responsible for triggering victims, with few exceptions, the people who inflicted grievous hurt and sorrow evaded justice.

A great challenge in classrooms throughout British Columbia is how to teach about the Indian Residential School experience. The provincial curriculum overlays, yet again, the evidence-based world view of western cultural and academic perspective that requires survivors to retell their experiences. This emphasis on evidence and on reciting the harms totally discounts, yet again, our syath (history) and values. Sadly, the great gifts and teachings of our Ancestors, which provide protection to our community, are lost in the approach.

Unwinus

Our mother, Kay George, was taken to Kuper Island Indian Residential School after her mother's death. Like the experience of many other children, hers was a horrible experience. She never told us about her experiences at Kuper Island because that would be too dark. Instead, every day she told us how much she loved us and how much we were loved.

Our mom came from a traditional family.[1] Her mother, Martha O'Shane Joseph, bedbound for most of our mom's childhood, told her daughter stories from her bedside about working hard, being clean, and not being stubborn.[2] From her, my mom learned about being strong even if you are not physically able to move around.

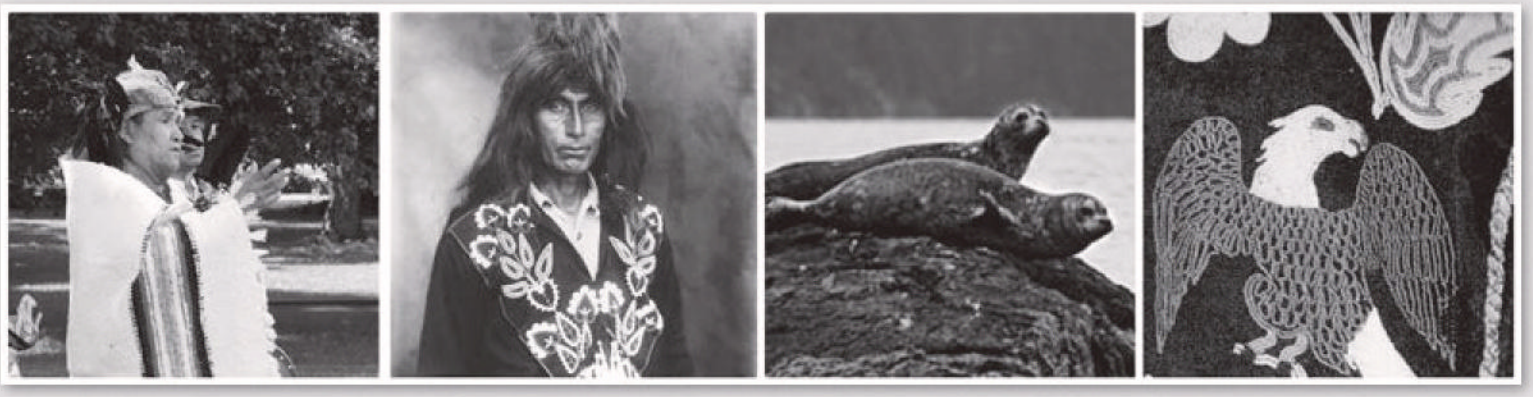
In the photo of my mother with students [on previous page] during the 1970s, she was telling a story about not being stubborn for a John Barsby Junior High School class in a Snuneymuxw longhouse. This was one of her mother's stories. She undertook this during her work in the 1970s with the Snuneymuxw cultural research program, Q'Puthet Unwinus. Sulsawlewh, who agreed to help us echo strength for the young people, gave us this term because it means "gathering together." Unwinus, Snuneymuxw for Centre village, is the original name for what we now know as Snuneymuxw Number One reserve. As with many things in our lives, government and the church changed our terminology to make it easier for them—and in doing so began the long history of erasing our place in the world.

The best of both worlds

At the same time as my mother's visit to the longhouse with the students, John Barsby Junior High School offered their first-ever Native Studies class in which

Everyday snuw'uy'ulth

Not long ago, our little family was at a Duncan restaurant. Charlie, we call him Cha Chi, sat next to me, his Poppa Bill. Within short order he looked up at me and said, "Poppa Bill, how come you don't get a haircut?" I replied, "Do I need a haircut grandson?' He replied "Yes." In our culture, my sister's grandchildren are also my grandchildren. I suspect it was our old peoples or Ancestors reinforcing and passing along snuw'uy'ulth.



Dr. Samuel Sam from Tsartlip First Nation (University of Victoria image) identified seal skin for use with traditional Coast Salish jackets. Kay George, Quw'utsun and Snuneymuxw identified the use of beadwork and embroidery to balance the ritual energy of dance jackets for the wearer.

Composite image by William A. White

they used Chief Dan George's landmark 1974 book, *My Heart Soars.* I thought this was an important book because Dan George wrote as our old people talked. Dan George's book was meant to prepare the new generation to sit with our own sulsalewh. Theirs was a time in which reading replaced our old people's stories, and students needed background information about the roles of men, women, and our relationship to all living things.

In the 1970s, when addressing us at public and family meetings, our old people spoke about using the best of both worlds. At the time, I had hoped using his book as a Native Studies text would begin that process and would be consistent with our old peoples' teachings about protecting and surrounding the young rather than focusing on the darkness of Residential Schools.[3] Dan George captured so much of our history, understood as syath. As a xwulmuxw leader, I suspect that the process of creating school curriculum was heavily influenced by lawyers and social workers who did not know our traditions and values. Instead, they consistently applied their own academic disciplines to our own experiences, much like priests and government officials since the arrival of the Europeans to our homelands.

In my cross-cultural work with xwulanitum (White) academics, I was always hampered by their insistence on applying their academic discourse, which was meant to assist us with our work with others. Thomas Berger provided the answer to our major dilemma about White people by saying, "[W]e are Western, and we are the most self-centered people on earth, and we don't respect any other culture or any other way of life."[4]

William White *(right)* **brought Coast Salish specialist Willie Pierre** *(left)* **from Katzie First Nation to work with students at St. Michaels University School in Victoria to bless a pole carved by Dylan Thomas from Lyackson First Nation in 2024.**

Photo: William A. White

On the other hand, I have had the pleasure of working with several astounding western professionals who stepped away from their discipline and culture and knew it was important to really listen. Dr. Philip Cook, International Institute for Child Rights and Development,[5] and Mr. Kevin Brand,[6] principal for Snuneymuxw First Nation's Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulth

William A. White collaborated with the Nanaimo Museum on their *From the Vault* feature exhibit in 2021 which highlighted teachings from late Snuneymuxw sulsalewh (Elders) shared in the late 1970s and Dr. Samuel Sam's teachings about Coast Salish seal skin jackets.

Nanaimo Museum

School in School District #68 Nanaimo, in the early 2020s are two examples.

My grandfather Adam Jimmy thought the same about the young David Rozen who interviewed sulsalewh to record place names in Salish territory of Vancouver Island. My grandfather, due to his experiences of intense oppression, hated White people. In the 1970s, the young David Rozen entered a big house in Cowichan. Several old people saw him, smiled intensely, called out his name, and spoke to him in our language.[7] They were excited to see him in their own setting, the big house. I never saw that again.

Listening and seeing

In the 1970s I learned that First Nation students were visual learners, as am I, and that using images that depicted our own people helped them learn. Later I used images and quotes to help youth learn about our cultural connections to all living things. This remains true today. For the very first time, I am writing about a teaching process while providing background about snuw'uy'ulth, our classic values. This reminds me of my collaborations with a colleague and friend Philip Cook when I was at the University of Victoria. In the course of our work around the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we travelled to Mexico, Toronto, New York, Paris, Johannesburg, South Africa. Every time we flew I told him about snuw'uy'ulth. Every time we travelled! He very kindly listened.

In balance, words as clothes to prepare us

From 1993 to 2004, I was the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at the University of Victoria. One of my responsibilities was to organize traditional receptions for First Nations graduates. We called on the hereditary leader, Longhouse speaker,[8] Shaker Church Minister,[9] Sweat Lodge Leader, and later Order of Canada Recipient, Dr. Samuel Sam from Tsartlip First Nation. For graduation ceremonies, Dr. Samuel Sam led with an opening prayer and a prayer song and, in keeping with the teachings of his old people, offered traditional advice to the graduates.

The second photo on the top of page 28 shows a Coast Salish Winter Dancer wearing a velour dance jacket with floral embroidery. I learned velour was originally made in France and introduced after the arrival of the Europeans to our homelands. After each reception, we all went to a side room to change and have snacks. During one of those sessions, I asked Sam if I could ask him about our dance jackets. I told him about velour coming from France. I asked him what our people used for jackets before velour. He answered they were made from seal skin! An astounding revelation. If you were to rub a velour jacket and then a seal skin, the fibres move

in a very similar fashion. He later said, "But you must know the words used to prepare it." His last statement, as was custom, spoke about the private nature of power and teachings within the Coast Salish world.

Our mother, Kay George, talking about dance jackets, said they were meant to bring balance to the wearer; otherwise, their intense power could hurt others, especially the owner's own family. Coast Salish rituals and ceremonies since the beginning of time understood relations with all living things had to be in balance. Just as sleni (women) brought power, focus and protection for the making of ceremonial blankets called swukwuxw, so too did they bring power, and balance through floral designs, birds to dance jackets and dresses worn by men and women.

Surrounding us with protection

Classic Coast Salish art[10] announced the relationship of nobility with the natural and supernatural worlds. In the 1970s, I asked our mother, Kay George, to talk to me about the human figure holding an animal. It was held at the UBC Museum of Anthropology and was a grave post from Tsartlip [see photo on page 27, top left]. She told me on house posts, two carved animals were shown at the top of the pole, blocking the path of several creatures heading up the pole. She said the animals at the top were meant to block the energy, the path of death for the immediate family and perhaps the community. As for the Tsartlip carving, the man is holding back energies associated with death.

The photo of the grave box page 27, top right has the same animal figures to visibly represent blocking death. At funeral ceremonies during our parents' time—the 1940s and 1950s—the body rested in its own home, and at least three or four women sat close to the casket, cried, and talked about the loss of their loved one. During our grandparent's time at funerals, a specialist was hired to provide songs and ceremonies to block the energy of death. Blocking the trail, if you will. House posts showing the animals blocking the energy of death, as well as women who wail while the body rests at the home, as well as the specialists who block the energy of death at the burial site no longer exist.

Today, within the Coast Salish region of Southwestern BC and Northwestern Washington, community members from the Shaker Church, through the use of candles and songs, provide the energy to provide healing as our loved ones leave this world and to assist in their journey to the next world. Old people during our childhood always told us that our loved ones who might have passed from a serious illness no longer carried the sickness when they passed. While art made the sacred visible, Coast Salish teachings provided by Elders to open community meetings with prayers songs, and special regalia were meant to protect the young of our nations.

I am now 76 years old, soon to be 77, and to this day, I am grateful to my teachers for the many times they covered me with their words and songs to remind me I belonged and was responsible for bringing their words forward for a new time and place. With love and blessings, Hystaapka, Dear Ones, Kay George, Agnes Pierre, Dr. Samuel Sam, Theresa Smith, Chief Adam Dick, Mr. Willie Pierre, and former Qualicum Chief and significant Historian Kim Recalma-Clutesi.

Endnotes

1. During childhood, our mother told us only one or two short stories about her experience at Kuper Island Indian Residential School.
2. Both of these values were consistent values spoken about by our sulsaleweh/elders. Those values are understood as Snawayalth.
3. Watch "Echoing of the Elders: Teachings for Coast Salish Youth" on YouTube. It is a phenomenal video that opens with one of my teachers, Agnes Pierre, from Katzie First Nation singing an opening song. Please note that she does not talk about the Indian Residential School Experience. My teacher of 10 years, the eminent Dr. Samuel Sam, Tsartlip, who shares teachings with Salish youth—in all my time with him, he only talked briefly about the Residential School experience once.
4. Justice Thomas R. Berger, quoted in Rae Corelli, "White Man's Passion: Special Report," *Maclean's,* July 14, 1986, 27.
5. Dr. Philip Cook and I both worked at developing two courses that featured Elders such as Agnes Pierre, Samuel Sam, Theresa Smith, and renowned Coast Salish artist Charles Elliott. These courses were for a School of Child and Youth Care summer session.
6. The papers I have written for *British Columbia History* represent some of the topics I shared with him over the period of four years. Very early in his appointment, Kevin Brand and I often talked about my experiences with Elders and the School District in the 1970s and shared at least 8–10 articles I had written about our traditions. He, in turn, shared these with his colleagues. We both had taken history courses, and I suspect that helped. He was a great listener, and I thought a gift to Indian Education in the district. He was significantly different than my experience with teachers and principals in the 1970s. A phenomenal collaboration and in keeping with the newly coined reconciliation.
7. See David Lewis Rozen, "Place-Names of the Island Halkomelem Indian People" (master's thesis, UBC, 1985).
8. See Wayne Suttles, "Central Coast Salish," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* ed. Wayne Suttles, vol. 7, *Northwest Coast* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1990).
9. See Pamela T. Amoss, "The Indian Shaker Church," in *Handbook of North American Indians,* vol. 7, *Northwest Coast.*
10. After at least 150 years of systemic oppression by Church and State, Coast Salish art almost disappeared. Thankfully, with the efforts of Simon Charlie from Quw'utsun and Charles Elliott from Tsartlip during the 1970s there was a resurgence of the art that made our sacred concepts visible.

William White, B.A. (University of Victoria, 1991) is currently at member of Snuneymuxw Chief Michael Wyse's Elders Advisory Committee and advises Kw'umut Lelum Child and Family Services in the application of traditional knowledge. He advises St. Michaels University School on applying traditional teachings for its Indian Residential School and Indigenous events. William's mother, Kay George from Qu'wutsun, provided him with central values around snuw'uy'ulth (teachings). On William's father's side of the family, his grandfather is George White from Snuneymuxw. On his mother's side of the family, his grandfather is Adam Jimmy from Qu'wutsun.

The sequoia towering over Oak Bay Junior High School with grade 11 student Kate Boyd standing below.
Photo: Rick James

AN AMERICAN LEGACY

Victoria's Sequoias

By Rick James

There they are—sequoias standing majestically over Victoria's lovely Rockland Avenue on the way to Government House. Looking into how these trees, which are not native to Vancouver Island, ended up there, I immersed myself in some serious research. The answer soon became quite clear: seedlings were brought north from California. It was most rewarding identifying the original owners of the acreages where these trees were planted in the late 1800s. What I discovered was to inspire me to work up my next book: *Twin Cities: Victoria and San Francisco.*

One day after becoming immersed in the mystery of these magnificent trees, I happened to be strolling along Bowker Creek just below Oak Bay High School where I graduated back in 1965, and there it was! One very large sequoia stands majestically out on the lawn overshadowing the Junior High. This tree was planted by Alexis Carni Casanave. Born in France in 1845, Casanave headed out to America as a young man eager to earn a good living. He spent some time in San Francisco and set off up to the Fraser River in the early 1860s to wander its banks as an itinerant gold prospector.

Some 20,000 to 30,000 prospectors keen to make a fortune had headed up to Fort Victoria through the summer and fall of 1858. These were mostly Yanks who had failed to strike it rich up in California's Sierra

Nevada hills in the 1849 gold rush. When word reached them about a big strike up along the Fraser River, they stampeded down to San Francisco Bay to board anything that would float to get up to British territory. As a result, the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Victoria—only populated by 300 overlords, servants and farmers at the time—was quickly transformed into another wild west town.

After failing to strike it rich, Casanave returned to Victoria in 1875. Now age 30, he turned his hand to homesteading. He obtained 10.06 acres of Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor John Tod's property alongside Bowker Creek immediately south of today's Cadboro Bay Road. He set up a dairy and began mixed farming at the place he named Oak Farm and raised his large family there.[1]

Two grand sequoias overlook the intersection of Rockland and Moss Streets. These were planted by William Parsons Sayward. He was among the crowd of fortune seekers who arrived in Fort Victoria by sea from San Francisco to join the Fraser River gold rush. Victoria was on the brink of an economic boom upon Sayward's arrival, and he could see that a steady supply of lumber would be much needed. That being said, he set out to build a water-powered sawmill at Mill Bay on Saanich Inlet and another one in Victoria harbour.

The Jewel of James Bay. Photo: Rick James

Sayward became Victoria's very first sawmill baron with his domain eventually extending down into Puget Sound as well as over on the mainland. By the turn of the new century, William Parsons Sayward had bought land and built a home on what was James Douglas's large estate called Fairfield Farm. Here the sequoias still stand.[2]

A jewel of James Bay lies nestled beneath a canopy of California sequoia and beech trees at the corner of Menzies and Michigan streets.[3] What is known today as Irving Park was the original site of the lovely home that steamship captain John Irving built for his young family.

John's father, William Irving, who was of Scottish origin, set out to North America as a young man. After establishing a transportation business delivering lumber from California up the coast to Portland, he moved his family to Victoria in 1859. He became a partner in the British Columbia and Victoria Steam Navigation Company and garnered a fortune as an owner of paddlewheelers transporting gold miners up the

Fraser River. After William passed on, his son John took over his dad's Pioneer Line and founded the Canadian Steamship Navigation Company in 1881 and was soon running steamers all up and down the coast.

At the home John Irving built for his young family in James Bay, he planted sequoias, nine of which remain standing majestically in today's Irving Park, reminding us of the family's connection to Oregon and California.[4]

In 1858, James Douglas set aside land for recreation and enjoyment, and in 1889, that land was developed as Beacon Hill Park. A few prominent Victoria pioneers contributed funds to purchase 2,000 ornamental trees from nurseries in California and Pennsylvania. Along with swamp cypress, holly, purple beech and a number of others, some 50 sequoias were brought up the coast from the Sierra Nevada mountains by R.P. Rithet and Company. Once they arrived in Victoria, Robert Paterson Rithet oversaw their planting and stated "I am certain they will succeed"[5] which they have indeed done.

Majestic sequoias on the road up to Government House. Photo: Rick James

Rithet was doing exceedingly well financially at the time after establishing business and commercial links with San Francisco. His firm, R.P. Rithet and Co., were importers and agents of liquor and groceries that expanded to become a shipping and insurance company with close ties to California. Overall, Rithet proved to be one astute judge of the market—particularly with the business communities in both Victoria and San Francisco.[6]

Just down the hill from Sayward's two sequoias is what is claimed to be Victoria's tallest tree. At 50 metres (164 feet), it stands proudly out on its own on the corner of Richardson and Moss Streets. One source has it that it was germinated and planted back in 1854 on what was Hudson's Bay Company Chief Factor James Douglas's 418-acre property, Fairfield Farm. Its seedling is said to have been a gift from California's Governor.[7]

Rick James is a maritime historian, writer, and photographer based in Courtenay, British Columbia. He has written about the history of British Columbia's ships, shipwrecks, and rum running.

Endnotes

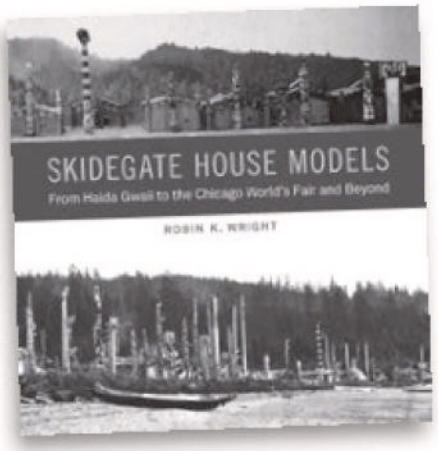
1. This information about Alexis Casanave is from the *History of Oak Bay* website. Find it at webturf.oak.bay.history.people: Alexis Casanave and John Sylvester Bowker.
2. Richard Mackie, "Sayward, William Parsons," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol. 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), biographi.ca/en/bio/sayward_william_parsons_13E.html.
3. Danda Humphreys, "James Bay's Irving Park," *Focus on Victoria*, August 2009, focusonvictoria.ca/victoria-mapping-project/history/irving-park/.
4. Information about the Irving sequoias has been taken from Humphreys as well as Edward E. Affleck's, "Steamboat Around the Bend: The *Governor Douglas,* the *Colonel Moody* and James W. Trahey," *B.C. Historical News*, vol. 35.3 (Summer 2002), 34-35; and W. Kaye Lamb," Irving, William, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* vol. 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), biographi.ca/en/bio/irving_william_10E.htm.
5. "Giants Rooted Among Us," Interpretative panel in front of Beacon Hill bird sanctuary, Victoria.
6. Daniel Clayton, "Rithet, Robert Paterson," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography.* vol. 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), biographi.ca/en/bio/rithet_robert_paterson_14E.html.
7. From Gerald H. Chaster, D.W. Ross, William Herbert Warren, and John W. Neill, *Trees of Greater Victoria: A heritage* (Victoria: Heritage Tree Society, 1998); and Ross Crockford, "Trees and the City," in *Victoria*: *The Unknown City,* December 18, 2007, unknownvictoria.blogspot.com.

A Year of Refracting History!

The Spring 2025 issue marks my first anniversary at *British Columbia History* magazine. As an avid reader and collector of BC books, I cannot overstate my continuing excitement to have the opportunity to read, critically examine, and write about so many great titles. When new books show up at my doorstep or in my mailbox, I sometimes still wonder *Is this real*?!

I'm a lifelong coastal dweller, so I've enjoyed the chance over the last year to explore books and digital resources focused on areas outside my region. I feel thankful for the authors, editors, publishers, and publicists who have introduced me to the wide range of people, places, cultures, and communities that are part of BC's diverse story. When I reflect on my early goal of trying out new ways of engaging with BC's history, I think about the digital exhibits, graphic novels, podcasts, and even a poetry collection that I've featured in this column. Hopefully, Refracting History continues to be a source of inspiration for building your own reading lists and to-be-read piles, and I look forward to providing more suggestions for keeping you engaged with BC's history.

Dalys Barney



Skidegate House Models: From Haida Gwaii to the Chicago World's Fair and Beyond, by Robin K. Wright (Vancouver: UBC Press; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2024). $60

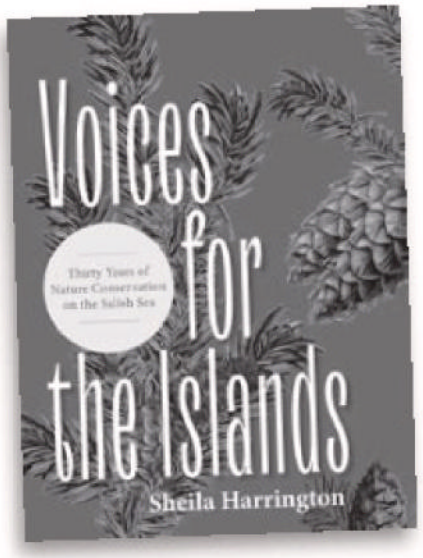
As well as featuring exhibits, pavilions, and the very first Ferris wheel, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (also known as the Chicago World's Fair) also included a number of model Indigenous villages. James Dean of Victoria was charged by the organizers of the fair's anthropology exhibits to commission Haida carvers to create model houses and poles representing the village of HlGaagilda Llnagaay (Skidegate). The intent was to depict the village as it appeared in 1864. The resulting Skidegate model village featured 29 houses and 17 free-standing poles carved by at least 17 different artists, and it was displayed inside the Anthropology Building during the fair's six-month run. The model is significant as it "is the only known model village in North America carved by nineteenth-century Indigenous residents of the village it portrayed" (from the front cover flap).

Based on over twenty years of collaborative research, art historian Robin K. Wright has pulled together historical photographs, field and collection notes, museum records, and oral histories to document the fascinating story of the model village. In *Skidegate House Models* she details how the concept for the model village was developed, profiles each artist, provides analysis about the likely connections between the models and original real-world houses and poles, and traces what happened to the pieces of the model after the fair.

A beautiful coffee-table book, *Skidegate House Models* features both archival photos and striking images of the model houses and poles that are accounted for today.

House Model No. 5, Sgyam Sgwaan Naas, "Sparrow Hawk House," made by Adam Brown, 1892.
Photo: Gail Specht, courtesy of the Field Museum, cat. no. 17816.

The current locations of some of the pieces of the model are still unknown, but there is always hope that they will be found and recognized as important pieces of Haida art, culture, and history.



Voices for the Islands: Thirty Years of Nature Conservation on the Salish Sea, by Sheila Harrington (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2024). $34.95

Located between Vancouver Island and the British Columbia mainland, the beautiful, yet ecologically fragile, islands in the Salish Sea hold a special place in the hearts of many. The islands' unique coastal environments are not only exceptional natural spaces but are also home to many increasingly at-risk species. The work by local citizens to protect these complex ecosystems is the topic of *Voices for the Islands: Thirty Years of Nature Conservation on the Salish Sea,* by Sheila Harrington.

Harrington spent three years sailing between the islands, interviewing dedicated and enthusiastic individuals who have contributed to protecting land on the islands. In the book's foreword, environmental activist Briony Penn introduces the diverse group of islanders whose efforts Harrington chronicles:

> This book is the most recent chapter of a long history of strong matriarchs, fearless fishermen, hippie accountants, loud librarians, gutsy hairdressers, energetic ecoforesters, senior shit disturbers, activist artists, organized kindergarten teachers, tireless biologists and all the other islanders who roll up their sleeves for beauty, future generations, and the natural world in a culture that doesn't value these things. (Penn, p. vi)

Harrington explains her viewpoint: "We are at a crisis, an ecological crisis, and a social crisis. With an explosive population growth on the coast and the islands, and constant pressure for more housing, natural areas are at a high risk" (p. 248). She outlines the founding, growth, and activities of local nature conservancies on 17 different islands including Gabriola, Thetis, Salt Spring, North and South Pender, Saturna, Mayne, Galiano, Hornby, Denman, Quadra, Cortes, Savary, Bowen, Gambier, and Lasqueti, and she details the partnerships these groups have worked within and the successes and challenges they've had over the last 30 years.

The stories Harrington heard of passionate volunteers working in collaborative ways to protect their beloved islands were inspiring. "Reflecting on all the wonderful, dedicated people I'd met, I felt exhilarated. Even though, like me, almost everyone said that they often felt despair over the dwindling forests, wildlife, and natural areas, they were raising their heads and hearts, taking their islands' futures into their own hands" (p. 123). In *Voices for the Islands*, Harrington offers a conservation road map, showing ways in which the dedication and perseverance of individuals has already had meaningful impacts

Sheila Harrington Photo: Gordon Scott

toward protecting land for the future. She asks us to re-examine our relationship with nature and to consider choosing paths that will help in meeting goals like Canada's attempt to protect 30 percent of the country's land and oceans by 2030. She stirs readers to acknowledge that we all could contribute to conservation efforts, helping to protect the natural wonders of this province.

Excerpts from *Voices for the Islands: Thirty Years of Nature Conservation on the Salish Sea*, by Sheila Harrington (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2024). Reprinted with the permission of the publisher.

real ones, by katherena vermette (Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2024). $35

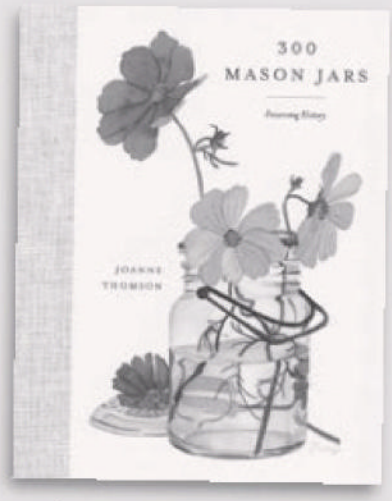
In October of 2024, just days before Jani Lauzon's play co-written with Kaitlyn Riordan was set to open at the Belfry Theatre in Victoria, questions began to surface in the media about Lauzon's claims of Métis ancestry. The play, entitled 1939, was originally produced in 2022 for Ontario's Stratford Festival and features themes related to the residential school experience. But suddenly, it seemed that Lauzon might join the list of artists who have been called out for Indigenous identity fraud. Notable examples include author Joseph Boyden, actor and director Michelle Latimer, and musician Buffy Sainte-Marie, who have all been questioned on their claims of Indigenous ancestry.

Longlisted for the 2024 Giller Prize, katherena vermette's new novel, *real ones*, addresses the complex issue of Indigenous identity fraud. When their White mother, Renee (a painter who styles herself as an Indigenous artist named Raven Bearclaw), is exposed for not actually having Indigenous ancestry, sisters lyn and June (who are Michif through their father) must grapple with the consequences. Before being publicly exposed by a reporter looking into her background, Renee had falsely represented herself for years, securing grants and positions intended for Indigenous artists.

The consequences of Renee's lies ripple outward through her family. After receiving a message from the reporter before the story is published, June predicts the difficult days ahead: "We're gonna be pulled into this like a riptide" (p. 11). Throughout the novel, lyn and June contend with the anger and backlash of the public. The sisters also examine their individual identities, reflecting on the past traumas of their childhood.

Although *real ones* is fictitious, it's a depiction of today's real-world headlines. Unfortunately, Indigenous identity fraud has become a newsworthy issue, and this book is an opportunity for readers to contemplate its impacts. We are invited to consider how fabricated backstories can gain imposters undeserved accolades, jobs, and grants, and how damaging these false narratives can be for connected Indigenous families and communities.

BOOK MARKED!



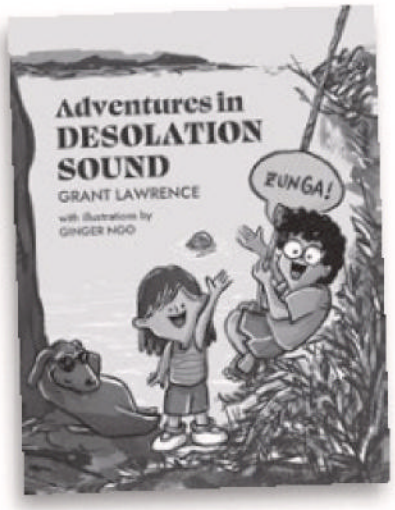
300 Mason Jars: Preserving History, by Joanne Thomson (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2024). $34.95

Call them memorabilia, mementos, keepsakes, or souvenirs, we all keep objects to remind us of people, places, or events. But everyday items from our homes and yards can also become symbols, triggering memories of times past. Be it snippets of plant life, fresh fruits or vegetables, household objects, or family heirlooms, each item featured in Joanne Thomson's *300 Mason Jars* is a fragment of Thomson's journey to understand her family's past.

The book features watercolour paintings of Mason jars with objects in, on, or beside them, and each jar is accompanied by a short poem reflecting Thomson's thoughts on how the item fits into her family's story. "The lids are off the jars in all the paintings, so the secrets can circulate; the stories can join with other stories and become ordinary" (p. 2).

Exploring gender roles, food security, nature's cycles of hope and renewal, family heirlooms, artifacts, and hidden secrets, the visual storytelling of *300 Mason Jars* serves as a mirror, reflecting common human experiences and themes relevant to many families.

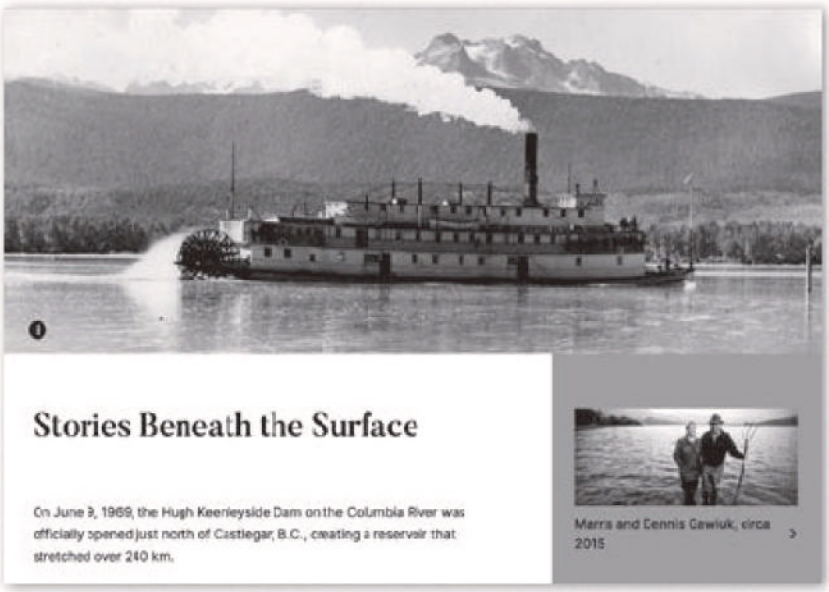
Read it for the beautiful artwork and the evocative poems, and to later consider what objects tell the history of your own family.



Adventures in Desolation Sound, by Grant Lawrence, with illustrations by Ginger Ngo (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2024). $24.95

Whether they call it a rope swing, a Tarzan swing, or a zunga, many British Columbians will have fond memories of using a rope tied to a tree to sail out over a favourite swimming spot, and of spending sun-drenched days vacationing away from home, modern conveniences, and luxuries. A summer vacation at a remote cabin is the setting for Grant Lawrence's new picture book for children, *Adventures in Desolation Sound*. Illustrated by Ginger Ngo, the book features colourful pictures that perfectly capture the vibrant hues of a coastal setting bathed in summer sun.

When their dad decides to provide them with "real life" experiences in nature, Grant and his sister, Heather, are taken away from their beloved television and forced into the wilderness. The young Lawrences are far from excited for their summer vacation to the family's new cabin in Desolation Sound. From the long, windy car ride (with no stops in case you miss the ferry), to meeting the local characters who sport rifles or heavy beards, to dealing with no electricity or toilet at the cabin, Grant and Heather's first visit to the Sound is a bit overwhelming for a couple of city kids. But as the summer goes on, they learn that experiencing nature and wildlife is really not all that bad; actually, it's rather fun. The weird neighbours turn into friends and the Lawrence family fishes, swims, and learns about the nearby Tla'amin people. By the end of the summer, Grant and Heather can't wait to come back.


Stories Beneath the Surface
On June 9, 1969, the Hugh Keenleyside Dam on the Columbia River was officially opened just north of Castlegar, B.C., creating a reservoir that stretched over 240 km.
Marra and Dennis Gawiuk, circa 2015

Stories Beneath the Surface

Long before its official opening on June 9, 1969, the Hugh Keenleyside Dam on the Columbia River had already massively changed the lives of those connected to the land in the dam's reservoir area. The damming of the Columbia just upstream from Castlegar affected wildlife, flooded the former village and burial sites of the Sn̓ʔaýckstx (Sinixt), and displaced settlers and their families from their farms and livelihoods.

Marketed as a means to control flooding and to help facilitate increased power generation, the Hugh Keenleyside Dam also brought disruption and loss. Buildings were burned or torn down, and homes and farms were abandoned. Even the cemetery in Mount Cartier was lost to the waters of the Arrow Lakes reservoir. Thousands of people were displaced, and communities were never the same.

Originally developed as an on-site exhibit at the Revelstoke Museum and Archives, Stories Beneath the Surface has been expanded into an online virtual exhibit hosted by Digital Museums Canada. Launched in April 2024, the digital exhibit features pictures, video interviews, and stories that share the experience of the people and communities south of Revelstoke that were displaced by the flood waters.

Learn more about this important community story by visiting the exhibit website: communitystories.ca/v2/stories-beneath-surface_se-cache-sous-surface/.

Readers familiar with Lawerence's 2010 memoir, *Adventures in Solitude: What Not to Wear to a Nude Potluck and Other Stories from Desolation Sound*, will recognize colourful characters like Cougar Nancy and Russell "the Hermit" reappearing in this kid-friendly version of Lawrence's experiences vacationing in Desolation Sound.

In today's world of near-constant screen time, trading devices for nature is likely on many parents' minds. *Adventures in Desolation Sound* reminds us that the battle of screen time versus green time isn't a new thing, and it makes a case that despite the initial eye rolling and huffy sighs from the kids, swimming, bird watching, and walks in the forest can end up being rewarding and enjoyable family experiences.

BRITISH COLUMBIA HISTORY

Dalys Barney is the Digital Collections Assistant at the Vancouver Island University Library. She grew up in South Wellington, a small coal-mining community just south of Nanaimo, and currently lives just across the river in Cedar. She is a member of the Nanaimo Historical Society and maintains her own local history blog, *Van Isle History Explorer,* at www.vanislehistoryexplorer.ca/.

Recently Released

Between Heaven and Balmoral: A History of Cary Castle, British Columbia's First Government House, 1860–1899, by Robert Ratcliffe Taylor (Altona, MB: FriesenPress, 2024). $14.99

Brewmasters & Brewery Creek: A History of Craft Beer in Vancouver, Then and Now, by Noëlle Phillips (Victoria: Touchwood Editions, 2024). $28

Drumming Our Way Home: Intergenerational Learning, Teaching, and Indigenous Ways of Knowing, by Georgina Martin (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2024). $29.95

From a Square to a Circle: Haida Basketry – Delores Churchill's Memories of Learning to Weave, by Delores Churchill (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2024). $34.95

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Gumboots in the Straits: Nautical Adventures from Sointula to the Salish Sea, edited by Lou Allison, with Jane Wilde (Qualicum Beach: Caitlin Press, 2024). $26

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Now You Know Me: Seeing the Unhidden Truth in Settler Colonialism, by k'ʷunəmɛn Joe Gallagher and John Matterson (Surrey: Hancock House, 2024). $24.95

A Place Called Cumberland, by the Cumberland Museum & Archives, edited by Rhonda Bailey (Vancouver: Figure 1 Publishing, 2024). $25

Raincoast Chronicles Fifth Five, with contributions from Jean Barman, Rick James, Peter Robson, David Conn, and Judith Williams (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2024). $60

When Heroes Become Villains: Helmcken, Trutch, Bowser, and the Streets, Lakes, and Towns Named After Them, by Jon Bartlett and Brian Robertson (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2024). $18

Young Readers

The Bears and the Magic Masks, by Joseph Dandurand, illustrations by Elinor Atkins (Gibsons: Nightwood Editions, 2024). $15.95

Raven Gets Tricked, by Andrea Fritz (Victoria: Orca, 2024). $21.95

We Are the Medicine, by Tasha Spillett, illustrated by Natasha Donovan, Surviving the City, vol. 3 (Winnipeg: HighWater Press, 2024). $21.95

History Reboot

The Curve of Time, new, expanded edition with foreword by Michael Blanchet and Judy Reid, by M. Wylie Blanchet (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 2024). $19.95

Slumach's Gold: In Search of a Legend — and a Curse, expanded and revised edition, by Brian Antonson, Mary Trainer, and Rick Antonson (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2024). $32.95

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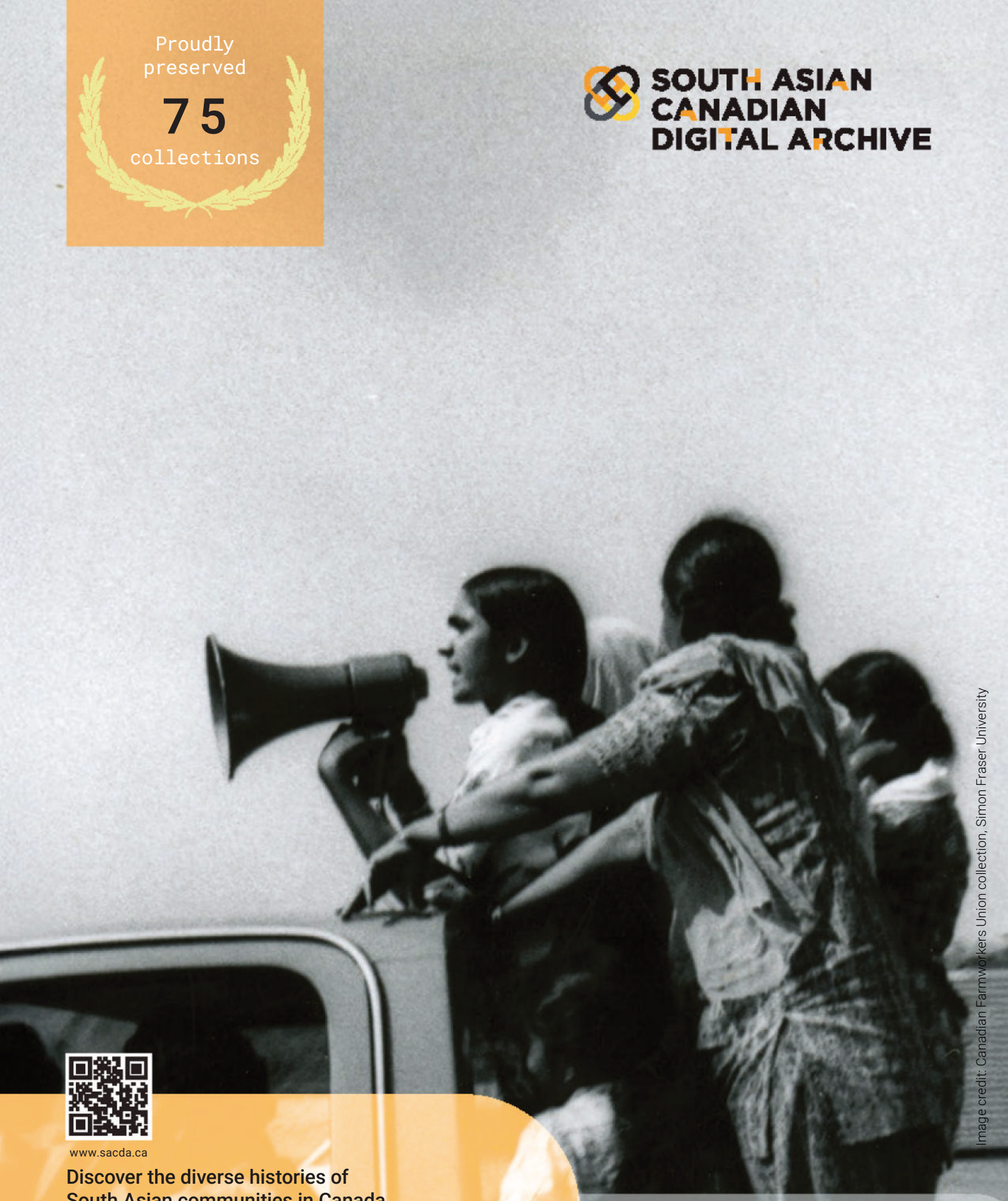

Image credit: Canadian Farmworkers Union collection, Simon Fraser University

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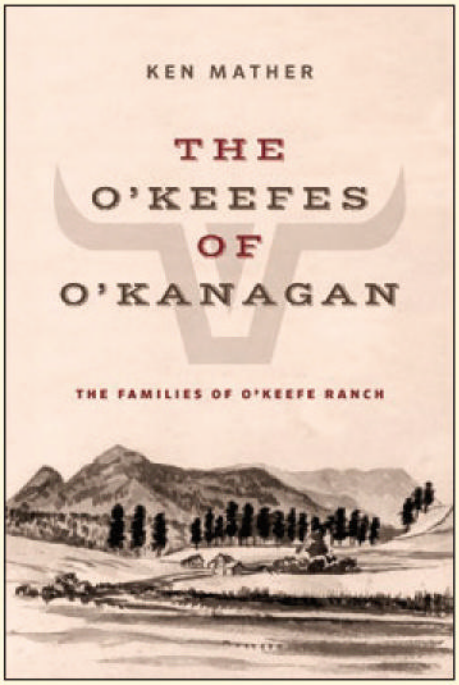

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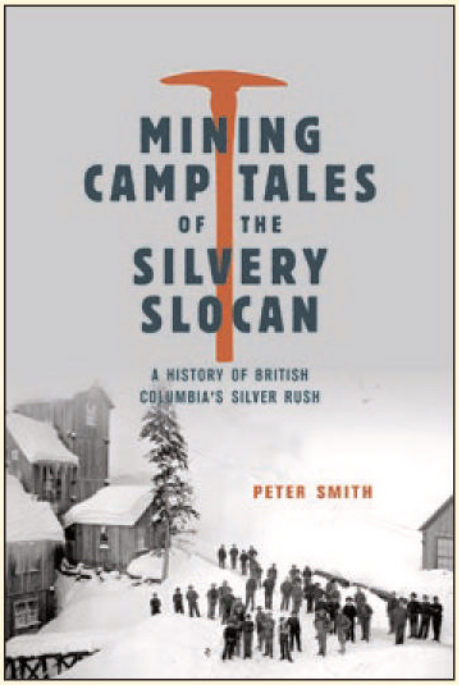

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